

Letter to the Governor

To Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of the State of Victoria and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

Dear Governor

We, the judges of the Supreme Court of Victoria, have the honour of presenting to you our annual report for the 2024-25 financial year, reporting on the Court's activities from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Yours sincerely

Richard Niall
The Honourable Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Victoria

About this report

This report is prepared as a requirement under provisions of the *Supreme Court Act 1986* (Vic). It is prepared primarily as a report to the Governor of Victoria on Court activities. The report also provides information for Supreme Court users and others with an interest in the Court.

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December 2025 © Supreme Court of Victoria

The Supreme Court acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land upon which the Court sits across Victoria and we pay our respects to ancestors, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders.

We extend that respect to all First Peoples and acknowledge the ongoing leadership in striving to improve justice outcomes and thank them for sharing their knowledge and experiences with the Court.

The cover image depicts a message stick on a Bar lectern, with a possum skin cloak in the background. Made of red cedar, the message stick was hand carved by Taungurung artist Uncle Mick Harding. The artwork on the stick is by Dixon Patten, called 'striving for a better tomorrow', and depicts Court Services Victoria's (CSV) Koori programs and initiatives. This stick was commissioned for the launch of the CSV Self-determination Plan. The possum skin cloak is designed by Uncle Mick Harding, and is of Bunjil, the creator moiety of Kulin Nations. The piece was commissioned by the Dhumba Murrumuk Djerring Unit and adorns the Elders and Respected Persons meeting room in CSV.





Goal

To be a modern, superior court that is trusted and accessible to all, fulfilling a fundamental role in our democratic society.

Purpose

To serve the community by upholding the law through just, independent and impartial decision making, and dispute resolution.

Values

Our goal and purpose are underpinned by the following values:

- excellence
- equality (before the law)
- accessibility
- integrity and transparency
- timeliness and efficiency
- certainty and clarity
- innovation and change
- courtesy and respect
- unity and wellbeing.

About the Supreme Court of Victoria

The Supreme Court hears some of the most serious criminal cases and complex civil cases in the State of Victoria, and some appeals from Victorian courts and tribunals.

As a court for all Victorians the Court hears matters across the state.

The Court has two divisions: the Trial Division and the Court of Appeal.

The Trial Division is made up of the Criminal Division, the Common Law Division and the Commercial Court. It hears serious criminal cases including murder and terrorism, civil cases involving significant injuries, large monetary claims and complex legal issues, and other serious matters. It also hears appeals from the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, the Children's Court of Victoria, the Coroners Court of Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The Court of Appeal determines whether a trial was conducted fairly and the law was correctly applied. It hears appeals of criminal and civil cases decided in the Trial Division of the Supreme Court, the County Court of Victoria and some VCAT appeals. Most appeals require permission from the Court of Appeal before they can be heard.

The Chief Executive Officer oversees the administrative functions of the Court, including the Registry, Court operations, Juries Victoria and the Law Library Victoria. The Funds in Court office operates discretely under the direction of the Senior Master.

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At a glance



Foreword

It is a pleasure to present the 2024-25 annual report for the Supreme Court of Victoria. Over the past 12 months, the Court has continued to serve the Victorian community.

This reporting period was marked by significant digital and operational changes which have enhanced efficiency and accessibility for all court users. While case numbers and initiations have continued to rise, clearance rates have continued to meet and exceed benchmarks. There is no doubt these figures can be attributed to the dedication of Court staff and judicial officers whose efforts have contributed to, and been aided by, the Court's continued focus on innovation.

We see the fruits of these efforts when looking at the Court's case management output against the backdrop of ongoing fiscal challenges and continued growth in the volume of work before the Court. Overall case numbers across the Court's divisions increased by 9.6%. Notably, the largest increase was seen in the number of civil cases brought before the Court of Appeal, an increase of 17.1% from the prior reporting period, while the Trial Division saw an increase of 9.8%.

The Court's overall clearance rate has continued in an upward trajectory, with 11.3% more cases finalised than in the previous reporting period. In particular, the Criminal Division achieved an extremely strong clearance rate of 168%. While this was aided by a reduction in the number of new case initiations, active case management also remained a significant driver to achieving this benchmark-breaking clearance rate. These figures highlight continued work to actively manage the increasing stream of incoming cases – brought on by many complex societal factors – and existing cases.

This year, a major change to the *Supreme Court (General Civil Procedure) Rules 2015* aimed to reduce the gap between costs that a litigant pays to their solicitor, and what they recover in a party/party dispute, providing a simplified, fair and transparent way for the recovery of costs. Additionally, the Costs Court completed 116 mediations, which saved

approximately 381 sitting days and about \$2.4 million in appearance fees alone. These outcomes provided the Court with even greater resource efficiency and significant cost savings for litigants.

In navigating various challenges surrounding the management of available resources, the Court also underwent a significant transformation that saw a new Supreme Court Registry model come into effect in February. This new model has created a single point of entry for court users and led to adjustments in the administrative and legal support provided to chambers.

In addition, the Court successfully delivered several digital and system improvements that have made it easier for the public to access court documents and further enhanced workflows in the Court's Registry. This included the introduction of the new RedCrest-Search website and the Probate Systems Upgrade Project, which allowed the first ever transfer of electronic Probate files to the Public Record Office of Victoria to take place.

To develop community understanding of the work of the Court, and of the wider justice system, the Court was proud to host various internship and education programs, as well as significant celebratory sittings. Throughout the year, several members of the judiciary also took part in speaking engagements. These initiatives and celebrations are detailed throughout this report.

We would also like to acknowledge Chief Justice Anne Ferguson, who retired in February 2025. Chief Justice Ferguson served as a Supreme Court judge for nearly 15 years and made incredibly significant contributions to the Court during that time. We extend our sincere thanks to her Honour for her dedication and commitment to the Court and its users.

Thank you to the judicial officers, staff, Court Services Victoria, and wider

legal community for your continued support. We look forward to continuing to work with you to serve the Victorian community into 2026 and beyond.



The Honourable Richard Niall
Chief Justice of Victoria



Michael Carroll
Chief Executive Officer



The Honourable Richard Niall
Chief Justice of Victoria



Michael Carroll
Chief Executive Officer

These pages provide a high-level overview of the caseload and services at the Court. Further details, including analysis of the data, can be found in the Work of the Court section of this report.

Cases snapshot

The Court's performance is measured by:

1

Clearance rate: Cases finalised in a given period, expressed as a percentage of cases initiated.¹

2

On-time case processing: Percentage of cases finalised² within 12 and 24 months of initiation.

3

Case backlog: Number of cases awaiting finalisation.

The Court also reports on the quality of its court files, known as court file integrity. This is the percentage of case files that meet established standards of availability, accuracy and completeness, as determined by random audits. Court file integrity is critical to ensuring proceedings are managed efficiently.

Variance is the percentage difference between 2023-24 and 2024-25 figures. Benchmark is a standard that the Court measures its performance against.

Differences between 2023-24 figures in this report and those published in the 2023-24 annual report are due to cases being credited to the reporting period after the report's publication.

Total caseload

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 7,320 | 8,026 | 9.6% |
| Finalisations | 6,759 | 7,525 | 11.3% |
| Pending | 6,680 | 7,181 | 7.5% |

Clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 92.3% | 93.8% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 62.1% | 60.2% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 89.5% | 88.8% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 10.5% | 11.2% | 0% |

Case backlog

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Pending >12 months | 34.9% | 31.6% | 20% |
| Pending >24 months | 13.1% | 11.8% | 5% |

Court file integrity

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Court file integrity | 93% | 92% | 95% |

1 Includes cases commenced.

2 Includes civil cases and criminal matters that were heard and determined, settled, not pursued, dismissed, permanently stayed, or any other manner where a case or matter may be considered concluded.

Court of Appeal

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 403 | 433 | 7.4% |
| Finalisations | 362 | 363 | 0.3% |
| Pending | 322 | 392 | 21.7% |

Civil cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 146 | 171 | 17.1% |
| Finalisations | 141 | 125 | -11.3% |
| Pending | 112 | 158 | 41.1% |

Civil cases: clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 96.6% | 73.1% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 60.3% | 64.8% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 96.5% | 99.2% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 3.5% | 0.8% | 0% |

Criminal cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 257 | 262 | 1.9% |
| Finalisations | 221 | 238 | 7.7% |
| Pending | 210 | 234 | 11.4% |

Criminal cases: clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 86.0% | 90.8% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 74.2% | 55.9% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 96.8% | 95.8% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 3.2% | 4.2% | 0% |

Trial Division

Total cases: civil and criminal

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 6,917 | 7,593 | 9.8% |
| Finalisations | 6,397 | 7,161 | 11.9% |
| Pending | 6,357 | 6,789 | 6.8% |

Criminal Division: trials and pleas³

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 86 | 62 | -27.9% |
| Finalisations | 83 | 104 | 25.3% |
| Pending | 133 | 91 | -31.6% |

Criminal Division: trials and pleas clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 96.5% | 167.7% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 33.7% | 26.0% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 71.1% | 76.9% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 28.9% | 23.1% | 0% |

Commercial Court: cases summary

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 3,158 | 3,495 | 10.7% |
| Finalisations | 3,040 | 3,534 | 16.3% |
| Pending | 2,040 | 2,001 | -1.9% |

Commercial Court: clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 96.3% | 101.1% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 71.5% | 70.9% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 94.7% | 92.5% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 5.3% | 7.5% | 0% |

Common Law Division: cases summary

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 3,363 | 3,743 | 11.3% |
| Finalisations | 2,950 | 3,215 | 9.0% |
| Pending | 4,043 | 4,571 | 13.1% |

³ Figures include both standard and fast-track committals.

Common Law Division: clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 87.8% | 85.9% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 49.0% | 47.1% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 83.0% | 83.5% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 17.0% | 16.5% | 0% |

Judicial and ADR⁴ registrar mediations

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Cases referred for mediation | 539 | 601 | 11.5% |
| Mediations completed | 352 | 369 | 4.1% |
| Cases resolved on day of mediation | 217 | 227 | 4.6% |
| Number of hearing days saved | 1,081 | 1,484 | 37.3% |

Services snapshot

Registry

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Counter enquiries answered | 1,972 | 2,019 |
| Self-represented litigants - enquiries answered | 9,351 | 11,004 |
| Subpoenas issued | 5,287 | 6,621 |

Probate Office

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--|---------------------|---------|
| Applications for grants of representation filed | 26,259 ⁵ | 26,638 |
| Grants issued | 24,363 | 25,979 |
| Applications made by people without legal representation | 2,256 ⁶ | 2,533 |
| Wills deposited for safekeeping | 417 | 604 |

4 Appropriate Dispute Resolution.

5 This figure differs from the published 2023-24 figure due to a correction made to the data after publication.

6 This number has been adjusted from the number reported in the 2023-24 annual report to exclude contested applications where another party was self-represented.

Funds in Court

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Orders | 5,727 | 5,834 |
| Total value of funds under administration, including real estate (\$ billions) | \$2.26 | \$2.42 |
| Administration expense ratio | 0.64% | 0.65% |

Law Library Victoria

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--|---------|----------------------|
| Queries, updates, tours and training attendees | 126,711 | 130,899 |
| Combined website visits and database usage | 399,520 | 889,781 ⁷ |
| Judgments published on the Library's website | 1,085 | 1,067 |

Juries Victoria⁸

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Citizens randomly selected | 344,160 | 324,516 |
| Summonses issued | 107,430 | 104,955 |
| Citizens attended | 20,739 | 21,534 |
| Juries empanelled ⁹ | 531 | 501 |

Community engagement¹⁰

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Website visitation | 2,129,230 ¹¹ | 3,248,691 |
| Social media followers (X and Facebook) | 25,287 | 25,104 |
| Episode downloads of Gertie's Law podcast | 17,411 | 13,210 |
| Court education program participants | 3,045 | 1,892 ¹² |

Finances

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Total operating revenue (\$'000) | 98,190 | 90,157 |
| Total operating expenses (\$'000) | 94,535 | 89,762 |
| Net result from transactions (net operating balance) (\$'000) | 3,655 | 395 |

7 As a result of changes to the way website visits are measured, 2024-25 figures reflect activities across all of the Library's digital platforms, providing a more holistic view of engagement levels.

8 Juries Victoria provides juries for both the Supreme Court and County Court.

9 Figures include both Supreme and County Court trials.

10 Figures relate to Supreme Court activity, excluding additional Court services (Funds in Court, Juries Victoria and Law Library Victoria).

11 Changes to reporting methods for website usage have affected the overall figure for the 2023-24 period. 2023-24 figures report the number of website visit sessions rather than number of pages viewed.

12 The education program was temporarily paused between December 2024 and May 2025. More information is available on p. 14.

A Court for the community

The Court hosted special ceremonial sittings, participated in student internship programs, provided regular updates on its activities through social media and the Court's website, and facilitated remote access to various hearings, speaking engagements and events.

The Court also provided improved access to Court hearings and documents with recent digital upgrades that have streamlined processes and reduced pressure on the Court's registry.

Supporting diversity and inclusion

The Court is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

Over the past 12 months, a number of law students joined the Court via the Victorian Bar's 2024 Diversity Internship program and its Indigenous Law Students' Clerkship program. Students were provided with a hands-on experience at the Court, where they learned about the work of judicial officers, chambers and court staff.

Highlights of these programs included the opportunity to shadow associates working in the Court. For many new lawyers, associateship roles are regarded as helpful in the transition from education into a traineeship, practice as a lawyer, or other pathways. The Court takes care to match students with chambers in the areas of law they are most interested in, wherever possible.

Students who participated in the Diversity Internship program completed their week-long rotation between October and December, while students in the Indigenous Law Students' Clerkship program worked in the Court for a week between February and March.

Honouring First Nations

In October the Court held a ceremonial sitting honouring the contributions, lived experiences and unique perspectives that Elders, First Nations barristers, solicitors and judicial officers bring to the legal profession.

The ceremonial sitting was livestreamed for members of the legal profession and made available for the public to view on-demand. Court Services Victoria's Dhumba Murmuk Djerring Unit provided valuable support and assisted the Court in coordinating the sitting.



Supreme Court of Victoria hosted students for the Diversity Internship Program.

Supreme Court Prize and Exhibition Prize

In July 2024, the Court awarded Victoria's highest-performing legal graduates with the Supreme Court Prize. The Prize is awarded annually to eight students, one from each of the state's eight law schools. Five Exhibition Prizes for the best honours thesis were also awarded. The award ceremony was held in the Supreme Court Library and was attended by then Chief Justice Anne Ferguson and Federal Court Justice Mark Moshinsky, who extended their congratulations to the recipients.



2024 Supreme Court Prize and Exhibition Prize recipients.

Hearing matters in the regions

Over the past 12 months, judicial officers from the Criminal Division, Common Law Division and Court of Appeal continued to travel to towns throughout Victoria to hear matters originating in the region.

The Trial Division and Court of Appeal sat for a combined 173 days regionally, comprising trials, plea hearings and sentences, with the Court of Appeal sitting in Bendigo and Ballarat, and the Common Law Division hearing matters in Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Wodonga.

First all-women Bench and counsel

History was made when the first all-women Court of Appeal Bench, addressed by an all-women bar table, sat on two matters while on circuit in Bendigo in May. Justice Emerton, President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Kennedy and Justice Orr heard two matters: an application for leave to appeal against conviction and a Director's appeal against sentence.

While in Bendigo, their Honours also took the opportunity to speak with students from La Trobe University and Bendigo Senior Secondary College about the role of judges and the Courts.

Speaking engagements

Judicial officers took part in numerous speaking engagements throughout the year. Among them, Justice O'Meara presented at the Trans-Tasman Bar Conference, Justice Nichols chaired a panel at the Journal of Equity Conference, Associate Justice Ierodionou featured on the International Bar Association's Inspirational Women in the Law podcast, and Associate Justice Gobbo spoke at the Australian Restructuring Insolvency and Turnaround Association Division Conference.

Many of these engagements were recorded and published online, enabling the public to deepen their understanding of the legal system, in addition to strengthening the Court's connections with the legal profession.



A historical first all-women Court of Appeal Bench sat in Bendigo.



At the launch of the Binding Authority, Chief Justice Niall (centre right) and Justice Gorton (right) delivered opening addresses. Photo courtesy of Neil Prieto.

In Conversation: Current Challenges Facing the Courts

In May, Federal Court Chief Justice Mortimer and Chief Justice Niall, discussed issues facing Australian courts in a session facilitated by Justice Richards. Their Honours spoke on topics including judicial workloads, the cost of litigation, financial pressures on courts and technology. The event was livestreamed by the Federal Court.

150 years of law reports

Chief Justice Niall and Justice Gorton delivered opening addresses at Binding Authority: 150 Years of Authorised Law Reporting in Victoria at Monash University Law Chambers. The event launched the Binding Authority, a commemorative volume curated by Victorian Reports editor Peter Willis SC and a distinguished editorial committee.

Courts Education Program

From 1 July to December 2024, the Supreme Court hosted 1,422 VCE Legal Studies students from 61 schools, as part of a Court-led program to provide students with opportunities to learn about the Court, to engage with judicial officers and associates, and observe proceedings.

In January 2025, Court Services Victoria (CSV) secured funding from the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner to resource the administration of the Courts Education Program in both the Supreme and County Courts. This Program, launched in May 2025, enabled the Supreme Court to continue engaging VCE students. From 1 May to 30 June 2025, 470 students from 23 schools visited the Supreme Court through the Program.¹³ Wherever possible, judicial officers addressed students and answered questions about the work of the Court, with 39 judicial officers participating in the program.

Participating teachers reported that the program enhanced student understanding of the Supreme Court and the justice system and allowed them to make visual connections with the content they are learning in the classroom.

Admission ceremonies

The Court held 35 admission ceremonies, admitting more than 2,100 people as Australian lawyers and welcoming them into the legal profession.

Family and friends attended the sittings, with many more watching online via livestream. Recordings were also made available on the Court's website.¹⁴

Promoting access to the Court

The Court's website is a key information hub for Court users, with a total of 3,248,691 website sessions recorded. The Court published 52 news items during the reporting period plus a range of resources about the work of the Court for the community including regular judgment and sentencing summaries,

and recordings of hearings and ceremonial sittings. Public interest in the Court's Gertie's Law podcast continued with the total number of downloads since its 2020 launch surpassing 460,000.

Reporting by traditional and digital media continues to be the public's primary source of information about the Court's work.

In the 2024-25 financial year journalists were connected to more than 630 hearings through video links and over the phone. In total, the Court's media team facilitated more than 1,740 connections for media to remotely access Court hearings.

Notably, more than 250 additional journalists from metropolitan, regional and international media organisations were remotely connected to matters in 2024-25 than the year prior. This access facilitates greater accuracy in the reporting of all matters being heard before the Court.

Twenty-nine sentence summaries were published on the Supreme Court's website. Videos of four sentences/judgment hand downs were shared on the Court's website for access on demand.

The team also worked to manage numerous high-profile matters, the most significant of which included 252 journalists and media outlets, including representatives from 15 international media outlets.

Systems improvements benefitting the community

Initiated to support fee regulation changes, enhance user experience, and modernise legacy systems, the **Probate Systems Upgrade Project (PSUP)** successfully delivered a transformative uplift to the systems and infrastructure supporting the Probate Office – with flow-on benefits for the operation of the Court more broadly.

PSUP has resulted in measurable improvements for Court users across service delivery, system stability and cost efficiency. Key achievements included:

- integration of advertising functionality into RedCrest-Probate, eliminating double data entry and streamlining workflows
- replacement of the legacy payment gateway with a more reliable and cost-effective solution
- delivery of more than 60 system enhancements to RedCrest-Probate, including the ability for the public to search Probate Office files online
- upgraded infrastructure, which improved the stability and responsiveness of our online filing systems
- development and launch of RedCrest-Search, improving litigation and court file searches for Court users, and creating significant resource efficiencies for Registry through the automation of over 10,000 litigation searches per annum
- PSUP also developed a mechanism for transferring digital court records to the Public Record Office of Victoria. More than 10,000 probate records were transferred to PROV with the first transfer of born-digital court records in Australia, significantly improving the ease with which the community can access those documents.

PSUP delivered further operational efficiencies. For more information, see p. 47.

In its first full year of operation, the Court received 1,248 requests via our **online opt-out system**. The system provides a quick and easy method for group members to opt out of group proceedings, enabling matters to progress more efficiently. This has been an important development given the growth in group proceedings commenced in the Court.

In 2024-25, the Court significantly enhanced its capacity for remote participation, live streaming, and digital evidence presentation through an **upgrade of the eCourts network**. The stable, scalable, and future-ready platform supports the evolving needs of a digitally enabled justice system.

¹³ For more information about the Court Services Victoria Courts Education Program, please refer to the *CSV 2024-25 Annual Report*.

¹⁴ For more information about how the Court supports admission ceremonies, please see Registry and Court Operations p. 42.

Work of the Court



Court of Appeal

About the division

The Court of Appeal hears appeals from criminal and civil cases decided in the Supreme Court Trial Division and County Court. It also hears some appeals from the Magistrates' Court (when constituted by the Chief Magistrate) and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (when constituted by the President or a Vice President).

Key points

1

Continuing high numbers of conviction appeals, combined with ongoing cases arising from matters considered by the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, contributed to an increase in pending criminal case numbers and median time to finalisation.

2

A significant increase in civil appeals, with more than 35% commenced by self-represented litigants, has contributed to an increase in pending civil case numbers.

3

Live streaming substantive hearings and engagement by judges with local students while on circuit allowed the community to access and better understand the work of the Court.

Overview

Criminal case initiations increased by 1.9% and finalisations increased by 7.7%. The new cases included a high number of conviction appeals, which have greater complexity and resource demands than other matters. This increase follows a similarly high number of conviction appeals in the previous year.

Conviction appeals, combined with ongoing cases arising from matters considered by the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, contributed to an 11.4% increase in pending criminal cases overall. Criminal cases also saw an increase in the median time to finalisation from 6.6 to 9.8 months, and a decrease in the percentage of cases concluded within 12 months from 74.2% to 55.9%.

A total of 155 criminal judgments were handed down, which included *Jan v DPP (Cth)* [2025] VSCA 43 and *DPP v LH Holding Management Pty Ltd; DPP v Hanna* [2025] VSCA 75.

A significant increase of 17.1% in new civil appeals, together with an 11.3% reduction in finalisations, contributed to an overall 41.1% increase in pending civil cases. Of the new cases, 35.1% were commenced by self-represented litigants. Notwithstanding a decrease in the median time to finalisation from 10 to 9.1 months, pending civil cases more than 12 months old increased from 8.9% to 19.0%.

A total of 75 civil judgments were handed down, which included *Footscray Football Club Ltd v Kneale* [2024] VSCA 314 and *Alphington Developments Pty Ltd v Amcor Pty Ltd* [2025] VSCA 48.

Live streaming of substantive hearings, including circuit matters in Geelong and Bendigo enhanced community access to the work of the Court, especially those in regional areas. The circuits also provided local secondary and tertiary students with the opportunity to observe hearings in person, gain an insight into Court operations and interact with the judges.

Total cases (appeal and leave to appeal)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 403 | 433 | 7.4% |
| Finalisations | 362 | 363 | 0.3% |
| Pending | 322 | 392 | 21.7% |

Civil cases

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 146 | 171 | 17.1% |
| Finalisations | 141 | 125 | -11.3% |
| Pending | 112 | 158 | 41.1% |

Clearance rate¹⁵ and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark ¹⁶ |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Clearance rate | 96.6% | 73.1% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 60.3% | 64.8% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 96.5% | 99.2% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 3.5% | 0.8% | 0% |

Median time to finalisation (months)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Civil appeals | 10.0 | 9.1 | -9.0% |

Criminal cases

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 257 | 262 | 1.9% |
| Finalisations | 221 | 238 | 7.7% |
| Pending | 210 | 234 | 11.4% |

Clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
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| Clearance rate | 86.0% | 90.8% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 74.2% | 55.9% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 96.8% | 95.8% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 3.2% | 4.2% | 0% |

Median time to finalisation (months)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|---------|---------|----------|
| Appeals against conviction/ conviction and sentence | 12.5 | 14.6 | 16.8% |
| Appeals against sentence only | 6.6 | 8.3 | 25.8% |
| Time to finalisation (total for all criminal cases) | 6.6 | 9.8 | 48.5% |

¹⁵ Clearance rate is a measure developed by the International Framework for Court Excellence to demonstrate a court's capacity to meet current demand. A measure of 100% means the Court is finalising as many cases as it receives; less than 100% means the Court finalises fewer cases than were initiated and, therefore, the number of pending cases is growing.

¹⁶ Benchmarks are a court-wide measure and not tailored to specific divisions, allowing the Court's divisions to measure activity.

Judicial officers who served in the Court of Appeal

Chief Justice

Chief Justice Ferguson
(until 2 February 2025)
Chief Justice Niall (from 3 February 2025)

President

Justice Emerton

Judges

Justice Priest
Justice Beach
Justice McLeish
Justice Niall (until 2 February 2025)
Justice Kennedy
Justice Walker
Justice Macaulay (until 20 December 2024)
Justice Taylor
Justice Lyons
Justice Boyce
Justice Orr
Justice Kidd (from 28 April 2025)
Justice Richards (from 13 May 2025)

Additional Judges of Appeal

Justice Jane Dixon
Justice Kidd (until 27 April 2025)
Justice Moore
Justice Richards (until 12 May 2025)
Justice Forbes
Justice Gorton
Justice O'Meara
Justice Fox
Justice Tsalamandris
Justice Gray
Justice Matthews
Justice Waller
Justice Harris
Justice Watson

Reserve Judges

Justice R Osborn
Justice Whelan
Justice Kaye
Justice T Forrest
Justice Kenny
Justice Garde
Justice J Forrest

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Pedley
Judicial Registrar McCann
Judicial Registrar Roberts
(from 11 June 2025)



Trial Division Criminal Division

About the division

The Criminal Division hears cases involving serious offences. This includes murder, manslaughter and terrorism offences. It also includes certain hearings under the *Bail Act 1977 (Vic)*, *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) Act 1997 (Vic)* (CMIA), *Serious Offenders Act 2018 (Vic)* and the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*, and appeals against convictions and sentences imposed by the President of the Children's Court. In addition, the division hears confidential applications under several Acts, including the *Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Act 2004 (Vic)* and *Surveillance Devices Act 1999 (Vic)*.

Key points

1

The Criminal Division had an extremely strong clearance rate of 168% for indictment matters in 2024-25.

2

The strong clearance rates in 2023-24 and 2024-25 have reduced the number of pending indictment matters to 72 (involving 91 accused). For comparison, the number of pending indictment matters reached 115 in May 2022, during the pandemic.

3

The number of primary bail applications remained steady. Within the broader applications work, serious offender supervision order applications increased by more than 50% and confidential applications decreased by almost 20% from the very significant number finalised in 2023-24.

Overview

This year the division continued the last two years' strong clearance rate of indictment matters (trials and pleas) by finalising significantly more cases than the number of new cases initiated. This was in part because of a reduction in the number of indictment matters that were initiated.

The division heard 28 jury trials, 21 of which were fast-track matters. This represents a 12% increase in the number of jury trials heard from the previous year.

The division also heard 49 pleas (21 of which were fast-track matters), a 2.1% increase from 2023-24.

The first application to suspend lifetime reporting obligations under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 (Vic)* was heard and determined last financial year, and a further four were finalised in 2024-25.

Fast-track committals



4.1

MONTHS SAVED

Clearance rate - all committals



168%

BENCHMARK 100%

Judicial officers who served in the Criminal Division

Principal Judge

Justice Jane Dixon

Judges

Justice Elliott

Justice Croucher

Justice Beale

Justice Incerti

Justice Tinney

Justice Gorton

(from 1 January 2025)

Justice Fox

Additional judicial officers who served in 2024-25¹⁷

Justice Priest

Justice Beach

Justice Niall

Justice Walker

Justice Taylor

Justice Kidd

Justice Kaye

Justice T Forrest

Justice Forbes

Justice Judd

Judicial Registrar McCann

Reserve Judges

Justice Champion

Justice John Dixon

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Freeman

Judicial Registrar Tueno

Cases committed to the Supreme Court

In 2024-25, the Court finalised 104 indictment cases while 62 indictment cases were initiated, which represents a clearance rate of 168%. Although the lower than usual initiation rate was a factor, the finalisation rate demonstrates the potential of active case management.

There are two streams of indictment matters committed to the Court – standard committal cases and fast-track cases. Fast-track cases have increased as a proportion of case initiations since the option was introduced during the pandemic, and this year they represented half of the new initiations.

Although there are more pre-trial steps to complete, fast-track cases took a similar time to finalise as standard committal cases, largely due to active case management. Active case management enables the division to

streamline pre-trial processes, reduce delays, promote the efficient and effective resolution of pre-trial issues, and maximise the chance of trials being ready to begin on their listed date.

Preliminary data collected since fast-track cases commenced in early 2020 indicates that the time from the date of charge to finalisation of a fast-tracked case is on average 4.1 months faster than if there had been a committal hearing in the Magistrates' Court.

In fast-track cases, the Court heard:

- 86 days of pre-trial witness examinations in relation to 32 accused, 95.3% of which were heard by judicial registrars
- 17 case conferences involving 21 defendants
- 21 guilty pleas before trial.

Total indictments (standard committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 46 | 28 | -39.1% |
| Finalisations | 49 | 66 | 34.7% |
| Pending | 74 | 36 | -51.4% |

Total indictments (fast-track committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 40 | 34 | -15.0% |
| Finalisations | 34 | 38 | 11.8% |
| Pending | 59 | 55 | -6.8% |

Clearance rate and on-time case processing (all committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark ¹⁸ |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Clearance rate | 97% | 168% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 34% | 26% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 72% | 77% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 28% | 23% | 0% |

¹⁷ Excluding judicial officers who presided over short confidential applications.

¹⁸ Benchmarks are a court-wide measure and not tailored to specific divisions. The court-wide benchmarks for 'time to finalisation' (also called 'on-time case processing') are unsuitable for the Criminal Division given the nature of its caseload, exacerbated by the fact that fast-tracked cases will, on average, take longer to finalise than traditional committals. As the benchmark is not tailored to the work of the Criminal Division, it is not achievable.

Clearance rate and on-time case processing (standard committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark ¹⁹ |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Clearance rate | 107% | 236% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 35% | 32% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 76% | 74% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 24% | 26% | 0% |

Clearance rate and on-time case processing (fast-track committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark ¹⁹ |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Clearance rate | 85% | 112% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 32% | 16% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 65% | 82% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 35% | 18% | 0% |

Finalised¹⁹ indictment cases (standard committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Trial/special hearing – jury | 13 | 18 | 38.5% |
| Trial/special hearing – judge-alone | 0 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Other finalisations under the CMIA ²⁰ | 5 | 5 | 0.0% |
| Plea ²¹ | 27 | 28 | 3.7% |
| Discontinuance | 4 | 9 | 125.0% |
| Transfer to another court | 0 | 4 | - |
| Other ²² | 0 | 2 | - |
| Total | 49 | 66 | 34.7% |

Finalised²³ indictment cases (fast-tracked committals)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Trial/special hearing – jury | 12 | 10 | -16.7% |
| Trial/special hearing – judge-alone | 1 | 0 | -100% |
| Other finalisations under the CMIA ²⁴ | 0 | 4 | - |
| Plea ²⁵ | 21 | 21 | 0.0% |
| Discontinuance | 0 | 1 | - |
| Transfer to another court | 0 | 1 | - |
| Other ²⁶ | 0 | 1 | - |
| Total | 34 | 38 | 11.8% |

¹⁹ Benchmarks are a court-wide measure and not tailored to specific divisions. The court-wide benchmarks for 'time to finalisation' (also called 'on-time case processing') are unsuitable for the Criminal Division given the nature of its caseload, exacerbated by the fact that fast-tracked cases will, on average, take longer to finalise than traditional committals. As the benchmark is not tailored to the work of the Criminal Division, it is not achievable.

¹⁹ This does not include cases where, for example, the trial concluded but the offender is still awaiting sentence. These types of cases will be reported in the financial year during which the entire proceeding is finalised.

²⁰ Includes cases where the accused was found not guilty by reason of mental impairment.

²¹ Includes cases where a plea of guilty was entered during trial.

²² Includes cases where a stay of the prosecution was ordered.

²³ See footnote 28.

²⁴ Includes cases where the accused was found not guilty by reason of mental impairment.

²⁵ Includes cases where a plea of guilty was entered during trial.

²⁶ Includes cases where a stay of the prosecution was ordered.

Sentence indications

Sentence indications are an opportunity for an accused to seek an indication of what sentence would be imposed if they were to plead guilty. Changes introduced in early 2022 have allowed the Supreme Court to give more detailed sentence indications, which has helped to resolve indictment matters prior to trial. In 2024-25, 21 applications for sentence indications were heard, 13 of which resulted in the accused pleading guilty. Based on the estimated trial duration provided by parties, resolution on a sentence indication saved more than 150 trial sitting days. Of all indictment matters that resolved with a plea of guilty and were finalised in 2024-25, 42.8% followed a sentence indication.

Case conferences

Case conferencing is an important aspect of active case management. A case conference is a hearing convened by a judge or judicial registrar to facilitate full and frank discussions between the parties to identify and narrow the issues in dispute and explore potential resolution of the case. Nothing discussed during the case conference can be used in evidence at trial. In 2024-25, the division heard 29 case conferences relating to 36 accused. Of the 59 individual accused's cases²⁷ finalised during the year, either by the accused pleading guilty or by the prosecution being discontinued, 49% had been the subject of a case conference.

Regional sittings

In 2023-24, the division sat at seven regional locations in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Mildura, Shepparton and Warrnambool and heard jury trials, pleas and sentencing hearings. Some regional matters were transferred to Melbourne after a successful application by a party.²⁸

Criminal applications

The division hears substantive criminal applications, such as bail applications, post-sentence applications and reviews,²⁹ applications and reviews under the CMIA, as well as urgent and confidential applications, such as those under the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999* (Vic) and *Major Crimes (Investigative Powers) Act 2004* (Vic).

Criminal applications are resource intensive and account for significant judicial workload. There is also often an urgency in the hearing and determination of such applications, which must be listed, heard and determined alongside trial and plea work.

In 2024-25, there were 111 primary bail applications.³⁰ This was an increase of 0.9% from the previous year. The number of CMIA applications remained consistent.

There was a significant increase in serious offender supervision order applications and reviews (55.6% increase). Although confidential applications decreased by 17.6% in 2024-25, there were still 29.6% more than in 2022-23. While the serious offender breach proceeding numbers have decreased from 2023-24, the reported data captures breach proceedings that have been finalised. It does not account for ongoing breach proceedings before the division that were not finalised in 2024-25.

The high volume and time sensitivity of applications work, in addition to the division's indictment cases workload, often meant that judicial officers from other divisions provided support.

Finalised criminal applications

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|------------|------------|---------------|
| Primary bail applications | 110 | 111 | 0.9% |
| Secondary bail applications ³¹ | 85 | 60 | -29.4% |
| CMIA applications and reviews | 38 | 41 | 7.9% |
| Serious offender – detention order-related applications and reviews ³² | 4 | 1 | -75.0% |
| Serious offender – supervision order-related applications and reviews ³³ | 18 | 28 | 55.6% |
| Serious offender – breach proceedings | 27 | 22 | -18.5% |
| Confidential applications | 170 | 140 | -17.6% |
| Total | 452 | 403 | -10.8% |

²⁷ Counted by individual accused, rather than matters which can include multiple accused.

²⁸ Pursuant to s. 192 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009*.

²⁹ Applications and reviews under the *Serious Offenders Act 2018* (Vic) and the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) for the continuing detention or supervision of a person once their sentence has ended.

³⁰ 'Primary bail applications' are the first application for bail made by an accused to the Supreme Court in a particular matter. It does not include bail applications made in the course of cases already committed to the Supreme Court for trial, which are counted as secondary bail applications.

³¹ Includes bail applications made in cases committed to the Supreme Court for trial, as well as applications for variation or revocation of bail.

³² Includes applications and reviews under the *Serious Offenders Act 2018* (Vic) and the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth).

³³ Includes applications and reviews under the *Serious Offenders Act 2018* (Vic) and the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth).

Trial Division Commercial Court

About the division

The Commercial Court determines commercial disputes, including complex matters involving significant monetary claims. Judges oversee both general and specialist lists within the division. They are supported by associate judges, judicial registrars and Registry staff.³⁴

Key points

1

The Commercial Court's workload continued to increase in 2024–25. The large number of pending group proceedings³⁵ continues to require substantial judicial and registry resources.

2

The number of initiations of winding-up matters has continued to increase significantly.

3

The backlog of Commercial Court matters has been successfully reduced, with a clearance rate of 101.1%.

Overview

The Commercial Court's workload continued to increase. In 2024–25, 3,495 cases were initiated, an increase of 10.7% from the previous year. The increase in workload is primarily due to two factors:

- ▶ a steady increase in initiations in the Corporations List (up 22.8%), particularly in applications to wind up companies on the basis of insolvency³⁶

- ▶ an increase in complex cases, in particular group proceedings. Cases in this category require active case management and consume significant resources, including judicial officer hearing time.

Despite the growth in initiations and the increase in the number of group proceedings, the Commercial Court increased finalisations by 16.3% compared with last year and raised its overall clearance rate to 101.1%.



³⁴ For further information about Commercial Court matters managed by associate judges and judicial registrars see p. 37.

³⁵ Commonly referred to as 'class actions'.

³⁶ Initiations of 'Winding up – failure to comply with statutory demand' matters rose 24.6% compared with the previous financial year.

Initiations



3,495

▲ 10.7% FROM 2023-24

Finalisations



3,534

▲ 16.3% FROM 2023-24

Clearance rate



101.1%

BENCHMARK 100%

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 3,158 | 3,495 | 10.7% |
| Finalisations | 3,040 | 3,534 | 16.3% |
| Pending | 2,040 | 2,001 | -1.9% |

Clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 96.3% | 101.1% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 71.5% | 70.9% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 94.7% | 92.5% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 5.3% | 7.5% | 0% |

Judge-managed cases

Commercial Court judge-managed cases are those managed and heard by a judge rather than an associate judge or judicial registrar.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 453 | 436 | -3.8% |
| Finalisations | 400 | 547 | 36.8% |
| Pending | 820 | 709 | -13.5% |

Judicial officers who served in the Commercial Court

Principal Judge

Justice Delany

Judges

Justice Sloss

Justice Connock

Justice Nichols

Justice Stynes

Justice M Osborne

Justice Attiwill

Justice Matthews

Justice Waller

Justice Cosgrave

Reserve Judges

Justice Garde

Justice Croft

Associate Judges

Associate Justice Gardiner

Associate Justice Hettye

Associate Justice Irving

Associate Justice Steffensen

Associate Justice Barrett

Associate Justice Gobbo

Reserve Associate Judge

Associate Justice Efthim

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Englefield
(until 20 September 2024)

Judicial Registrar Woronczak

Judicial Registrar Caporale

Judicial Registrar Gitsham

Corporations List

The Corporations List manages applications brought under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and the *Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001* (Cth). These figures reflect Corporations List matters that are managed and heard by judges, associate judges and judicial registrars.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 1,553 | 1,907 | 22.8% |
| Finalisations | 1,552 | 1,801 | 16.0% |
| Pending | 309 | 415 | 34.3% |

Judges in charge

Justice Connock
Justice Matthews

Deputy Judge in charge

Justice Delany

Associate Judges

Associate Justice Gardiner
Associate Justice Hetyey
Associate Justice Irving
Associate Justice Steffensen
Associate Justice Barrett
Associate Justice Gobbo

Reserve Associate Judge

Associate Justice Efthim

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Woronczak
Judicial Registrar Caporale
Judicial Registrar Gitsham

Technology, Engineering and Construction List

The Technology, Engineering and Construction List draws together three strands of related disputes. Some of these matters have been referred to the Supreme Court from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) as a result of recent case law relating to VCAT's jurisdiction.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance ³⁷ |
|---------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Initiations | 41 | 41 | 0.0% |
| Finalisations | 32 | 43 | 34.4% |
| Pending | 70 | 68 | -2.9% |

Judge in charge

Justice Stynes

Deputy Judge in charge

Justice Delany

³⁷ Due to the small number of cases in some lists within the Commercial Court, statistical variations can appear disproportionately significant.

Group Proceedings List (cross-divisional list)

The Group Proceedings List is a cross-divisional list spanning the Common Law Division and the Commercial Court. Group proceedings, commonly referred to as class actions, are brought on behalf of seven or more people whose claims arise out of the same, similar or related circumstances and raise substantial common factual or legal questions.

The table below relates to Commercial Court group proceedings only.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 12 | 10 | -16.7% |
| Finalisations | 10 | 8 | -20.0% |
| Pending | 40 | 42 | 5.0% |

Judges in charge

Justice Keogh
(Common Law Division)

Justice Nichols

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Gitsham

Taxation List

The Taxation List manages taxation-related appeals from VCAT and objections to decisions of the Commissioner of State Revenue. It also hears cases substantially relating to taxation, including taxation recovery and Goods and Services Tax (GST) disputes.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 12 | 14 | 16.7% |
| Finalisations | 9 | 21 | 133.3% |
| Pending | 21 | 14 | -33.3% |

Judge in charge

Justice Delany

Deputy Judge in charge

Justice Nichols

Arbitration List

Both Australian and international commercial arbitration disputes are initiated in the Arbitration List. They are brought under the *International Arbitration Act 1974* (Cth) or *Commercial Arbitration Act 2011* (Vic) and are often urgent.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 9 | 3 | -66.7% |
| Finalisations | 8 | 3 | -62.5% |
| Pending | 1 | 1 | 0.0% |

Judge in charge

Justice Stynes

Commercial and Retail Leases List (cross-divisional list)

Judge in charge

Justice M Osborne

The Commercial and Retail Leases List is a cross-divisional list that hears substantial commercial and retail lease disputes, appeals under s. 148 of the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeal Tribunal Act 1998* (Vic), and judicial review applications of VCAT commercial and retail lease decisions.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 8 | 15 | 87.5% |
| Finalisations | 4 | 9 | 125.0% |
| Pending | 11 | 17 | 54.5% |

Insurance List

The Insurance List manages commercial insurance cases including disputes about insurance or reinsurance policies, losses incurred in a commercial transaction, and business or property insurance disputes.

Judge in charge

Justice M Osborne

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 6 | 8 | 33.3% |
| Finalisations | 4 | 20 | 400.0% |
| Pending | 25 | 13 | -48.0% |

Intellectual Property List

The Intellectual Property List manages matters concerning allegations of infringement on, or determination of, intellectual property including copyright, design, patents and trademarks.

Judge in charge

Justice Attiwill

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 4 | 2 | -50.0% |
| Finalisations | 2 | 3 | 50.0% |
| Pending | 6 | 5 | -16.7% |

Admiralty List

The Admiralty List manages shipping matters brought under the *Admiralty Act 1988* (Cth). This includes disputes about loss and damage to (or caused by) a ship, and loss or damage to goods as a result of them being shipped.

Judge in charge

Justice Connock

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 1 | 1 | 0.0% |
| Finalisations | 1 | 1 | 0.0% |
| Pending | 2 | 2 | 0.0% |

Trial Division

Common Law Division

About the division

The Common Law Division manages proceedings relating to property, tort and contract law, wills, trusts, equity and estates, and the Court's supervisory jurisdiction over other Victorian courts, tribunals and public officials. Proceedings are allocated to one of 13 specialist lists for management by judicial officers and staff with relevant expertise. The division also shares two cross-divisional lists with the Commercial Court and has a General List for matters that do not fit within any of the specialist lists.³⁸

Key points

1

Initiations in the Common Law Division continue to increase, particularly in lists related to personal injury and in the Trusts, Equity and Probate List.

2

The division has modified case management and listing practices to accommodate the high number of pending cases. It has also commenced a comprehensive review of Practice Notes, conducted user-groups and implemented measures to streamline Court processes.

3

For a number of Common Law lists, the Court now issues a standardised timetable to prepare matters for trial within 12-14 months of an appearance being filed.

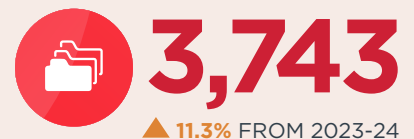
Overview

The Common Law Division experienced growth in its caseload during 2024-25 with 3,743 new cases filed, reflecting an 11.3% increase in case initiations compared with the previous reporting period. The primary drivers are lists related to personal injuries and the Trust, Equity, and Probate List.

Despite this increase, the division finalised 3,215 cases – a 9% increase compared with the previous period. However, the pending caseload remained substantial, with 4,571 cases pending at the end of the financial year – a 13.0% increase on last year.

These figures drive the ongoing challenges faced by the division in addressing ever-growing demand for its judicial and court staff resources.

Initiations



Finalisations



Pending



Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 3,363 | 3,743 | 11.3% |
| Finalisations | 2,950 | 3,215 | 9.0% |
| Pending | 4,043 | 4,571 | 13.1% |

³⁸ For further information about Common Law matters heard by associate judges, see p. 37.

Judicial officers who served in the Common Law Division

Principal Judge

Justice Andrew Keogh

Judges

Justice McDonald

Justice Quigley

Justice Richards
(until 12 May 2025)

Justice Moore

Justice Forbes

Justice Gorton
(sitting in Criminal division for 2025)

Justice O'Meara

Justice Tsalamandris

Justice Gray

Justice Harris

Justice Watson

Justice K Judd

(from 17 September 2024)

Justice Finanzio

(from 25 February 2025)

Reserve Judges

Justice John Dixon

Justice Ginnane

Associate Judges

Associate Justice Daly

Associate Justice Ierodionou

Associate Justice Irving

Associate Justice Barrett

Associate Justice Gobbo

Associate Justice Goulden

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Englefield
(until 20 September 2024)

Judicial Registrar Baker

Judicial Registrar McCann

Judicial Registrar Lorenz
(from 20 August 2024)

Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Clearance rate and on-time case processing

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Benchmark |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Clearance rate | 87.8% | 85.9% | 100% |
| Cases finalised within 12 months | 49.0% | 47.1% | 75% |
| Cases finalised within 24 months | 83.0% | 83.5% | 90% |
| Cases finalised >24 months | 17.0% | 16.5% | 0% |

Civil Circuit List

The Civil Circuit List manages cases mostly in relation to personal injury claims. It has a significant link to regional Victoria, with sittings in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Hamilton, Horsham, Mildura, Morwell, Sale, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga.

During the year, judges heard trials in Shepparton, Latrobe Valley, Bendigo, Wodonga, Geelong and Wangaratta. Matters set down for trial in other regional locations were settled before trial.

Judge in charge

Justice Forbes

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Irving

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Baker

Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 116 | 97 | -16.4% |
| Finalisations | 97 | 113 | 16.5% |
| Pending | 202 | 186 | -7.9% |

Confiscation and Proceeds of Crime List

This list manages civil proceedings brought under Victorian and Commonwealth legislation providing for the restraint or forfeiture of property allegedly connected with criminal activity.

The number of cases remained relatively small. However, they require case management over several years. They typically involve a large number of parties and determination of a substantial number of applications. Case management continues to benefit from regular management by a judicial registrar, improving the overall efficiency of the list.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance ³⁹ |
|---------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Initiations | 5 | 7 | 40.0% |
| Finalisations | 7 | 5 | -28.6% |
| Pending | 16 | 19 | 11.8% |

Judges in charge

Justice Gorton
(until January 2025)
Justice Keogh

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar McCann
(from 14 October 2024)

Dust Diseases List

The Dust Diseases List manages proceedings in which plaintiffs claim to suffer from a health condition attributable to the inhalation of dust, such as asbestos and silica.

The rate of initiations in the list remained steady following a number of years trending upwards. Due to the specific nature of asbestos-related conditions, these proceedings generally progress to finalisation with greater expediency compared with other personal injury matters.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 395 | 398 | 0.8% |
| Finalisations | 331 | 355 | 7.3% |
| Pending | 366 | 409 | 11.7% |

Judges in charge

Justice Forbes
Justice O'Meara

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Irving

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Baker
Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Employment and Industrial List

The Employment and Industrial List manages contractual and industrial disputes, appeals from disciplinary and other tribunals, and other employment-related matters.

The list saw a marked increase in initiations compared with the previous year. As a result, a judicial registrar was assigned to assist with the case management load in the 2024-25 year.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 29 | 46 | 58.6% |
| Finalisations | 23 | 29 | 26.1% |
| Pending | 26 | 43 | 65.4% |

Judge in charge

Justice McDonald

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Ierodiaconou

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

³⁹ Due to the small number of cases some lists within the Common Law Division, statistical variations can appear disproportionately significant.

Group Proceedings List (cross-divisional list)

The Group Proceedings List is a cross-divisional list spanning the Common Law Division and the Commercial Court. Group proceedings are brought on behalf of seven or more people whose claims arise out of the same, similar or related circumstances and raise substantial common factual or legal questions. The high-profile nature of cases within this list typically attracts media attention and the cases require substantial case management for an extended period, often several years.

The table below relates to Common Law Division group proceedings only.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 3 | 4 | 33.3% |
| Finalisations | 2 | 2 | 0.0% |
| Pending | 19 | 21 | 10.5% |

Judges in charge

Justice Keogh
Justice Nichols (*Commercial Court*)

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Baker

Initiations



▲ 26.6% FROM 2023-24

Finalisations



▼ -5.7% FROM 2023-24

Pending



▲ 24.8% FROM 2023-24

Institutional Liability List

The Institutional Liability List manages claims against an organisation, founded on personal injury or death due to alleged physical or sexual abuse of a minor. The list was established in February 2020 to manage growing numbers of personal injury damages claims following legislative amendments in 2015, 2018, 2019 and 2020 to facilitate historical child abuse claims.

The list experienced a 26.6% increase in initiations compared with the previous financial year. The volume of pending cases is substantial, making it the second largest list in the division, behind the Personal Injuries List.

The considerable interlocutory work required in these matters continues to have a significant effect on judicial and administrative resources despite extensive case management measures to expedite the progression of proceedings to trial.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 508 | 643 | 26.6% |
| Finalisations | 460 | 434 | -5.7% |
| Pending | 843 | 1,052 | 24.8% |

Judges in charge

Justice Forbes
Justice O'Meara

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Baker
Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Judicial Review and Appeals List

The Judicial Review and Appeals List includes proceedings relating to judicial review of, and statutory appeals from, decisions of lower courts, tribunals, public offices or bodies.

This list experienced a decrease in initiations overall. The volume of cases filed by self-represented litigants, however, remains at 50.8%, which presents challenges for case management, including the requirement for intensive triage and management protocols. The division uses measures to facilitate pro bono representation and continues to develop strategies for the efficient allocation of resources.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 248 | 202 | -18.5% |
| Finalisations | 215 | 234 | 8.8% |
| Pending | 229 | 197 | -14.0% |

Judges in charge

Justice Richards
(until 12 May 2025)
Justice Gray

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Lorenz
(from 20 August 2024)

Major Torts List

The Major Torts List manages proceedings that are primarily of a tortious nature including defamation, nuisance, intentional torts, police torts and contempt proceedings.

A slight decrease in the number of initiations compared with the previous year brought the overall number of pending proceedings to 131. There was a marked increase in finalisations which were up 36.4% compared with 2023-24.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 72 | 67 | -6.9% |
| Finalisations | 44 | 60 | 36.4% |
| Pending | 124 | 131 | 5.6% |

Judge in charge

Justice Keogh

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Daly

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Baker

Initiations



▲ 20.8% FROM 2023-24

Finalisations



▲ 11.8% FROM 2023-24

Pending



▲ 23.5% FROM 2023-24

Personal Injuries List

Proceedings managed in the Personal Injuries List include claims arising out of industrial accidents, motor vehicle accidents, medical negligence, and public and occupier's liability.

The list has experienced a consistent pattern of increases in initiations, with notable incremental growth over the past five financial years. Despite finalisations improving by 11.8% over the period, the number of pending cases has increased to 1,162, by far the largest of the division.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 606 | 732 | 20.8% |
| Finalisations | 457 | 511 | 11.8% |
| Pending | 941 | 1,162 | 23.5% |

Judges in charge

Justice Forbes
Justice O'Meara

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Irving

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Baker
Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Professional Liability List

The Professional Liability List manages claims for financial loss against a professional for breach of duty in tort or contract, related statutory breaches and breach of equitable duties (excluding claims against medical and health practitioners, which are managed in the Personal Injuries List, and building, construction and engineering practitioners, which are managed in the Commercial Court).

The number of initiations within this list has remained higher than normal over the past few financial years, mainly due to claims against legal practitioners for alleged breach of duty to clients seeking damages or compensation from redress schemes in respect of historical child abuse.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 67 | 78 | 16.4% |
| Finalisations | 38 | 59 | 55.3% |
| Pending | 130 | 149 | 14.6% |

Property List

The Property List manages proceedings concerning ownership disputes over real estate and property, including but not limited to possession or sale of real estate.

There was a slight increase in both initiations and finalisations during 2024-25. About 50% of finalisations are a result of judgments or orders granting relief, with about 70% of all finalised matters concluding within 12 months. This efficient finalisation rate can be attributed to the nature of these proceedings and the significant proportion of matters heard and determined by associate judges.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 227 | 276 | 21.6% |
| Finalisations | 237 | 252 | 6.3% |
| Pending | 197 | 221 | 12.2% |

Testators Family Maintenance List

The Testators Family Maintenance List manages applications brought under Part IV of the *Administration and Probate Act 1958* (Vic) for a provision or further provision from a deceased estate.

The list extensively utilises judicial and court-annexed mediations conducted by deputy prothonotaries to encourage early settlements, preserve estate assets and minimise legal costs. Most proceedings are resolved by consent or court-facilitated mediation, with judicial determination required in only a small number of cases.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 361 | 370 | 2.5% |
| Finalisations | 385 | 419 | 8.8% |
| Pending | 465 | 416 | -10.5% |

Judges in charge

Justice Gorton
(until 1 January 2025)

Justice Tsalamandris
(from 1 January 2025)

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Daly

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Baker

Judges in charge

Justice McDonald

Justice Harris

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Daly

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Lorenz
(from 20 August 2024)

Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Judges in charge

Justice Moore

Justice Gray

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Englefield
(until 20 September 2024)

Judicial Registrar Burgess
(from 14 October 2024)

Trusts, Equity and Probate List

The Court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear a wide range of proceedings concerning wills, probate and the administration of deceased persons' estates. The list also manages matters in relation to trusts of a non-commercial nature.

The list has experienced a steady stream of initiations. To enhance active case management in the list, an associate judge and judicial registrar continue to help manage the caseload.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 379 | 420 | 10.8% |
| Finalisations | 326 | 403 | 23.6% |
| Pending | 381 | 398 | 4.5% |

Judges in charge

Justice Moore
Justice Gray

Associate Judge in charge

Associate Justice Barrett

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Lorenz
(from 20 August 2024)

Valuation, Compensation and Planning List

The Valuation, Compensation and Planning List manages proceedings involving the valuation of land, compensation for compulsory acquisition of land, planning appeals from from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and disputes involving land use or environmental protection.

Initiations in the list remained steady compared with the previous year. The list continues to manage complex matters involving issues of public interest and planning law.

Total cases

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Initiations | 29 | 29 | 0.0% |
| Finalisations | 35 | 32 | -8.6% |
| Pending | 41 | 38 | -7.3% |

Judges in charge

Justice Richards
(until 12 May 2025)
Justice Quigley

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Lorenz
(from 20 August 2024)

Associate Judges' Chambers

About the Associate Judges' Chambers

Associate Judges' Chambers contribute to the just, timely and efficient resolution of matters across the civil divisions. They are responsible for matters arising in the original jurisdiction of associate judges and judicial registrars, as well as other complex matters referred from Supreme Court Trial Division judges. With an emphasis on service excellence and continuous improvement, the Associate Judges continue to adapt to a growing caseload through effective case management.

Overview

During 2024-25, associate judges and judicial registrars heard matters arising from all civil specialist lists, excluding arbitration, admiralty and intellectual property.

Of all cases that were finalised in the civil divisions with a hearing, 91.5% were heard in some manner before an associate judge or judicial registrar.

Associate judges and judicial registrars collectively heard 85% of all applications before the civil divisions of the Court including winding up applications. Between 55-60% of associate judges' total workload is applications that require rulings or judgments.

Case management and trial avoidance contribute to substantial cost savings for the Court and litigants. Following a listing before an associate judge, a number of matters were vacated,⁴⁰ saving approximately 160 trial days. This figure does not include the potential trial days saved through the just and efficient resolution of matters before they are assigned a trial date.

Associate judges handed down 259 written judgments and rulings in the 2024-25 financial year, which was a 5.7% increase on the previous financial year.

Number of hearings in the Applications List and Specialist Lists

 **10,747**

▲ 26.4% FROM 2023-24



Principal Associate Judge

Associate Justice Ierodiaconou

Associate Judges

Associate Justice Daly
Associate Justice Gardiner
Associate Justice Hettyey
Associate Justice Irving
Associate Justice Steffensen
(*Senior Master of Funds in Court*)
Associate Justice Barrett
Associate Justice Gobbo
Associate Justice Goulden

Reserve Associate Judges

Associate Justice Eftthim
Associate Justice Wood
(*Judicial Mediations April 2025*)

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Englefield
(*until September 2024*)
Judicial Registrar Caporale
Judicial Registrar Conidi
Judicial Registrar Baker
Judicial Registrar Woronczak
Judicial Registrar Gitsham
Judicial Registrar McCann
Judicial Registrar Lorenz
Judicial Registrar Burgess

⁴⁰ Either through full resolution, part resolution, or dismissal.

Hearings

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|---------|---------|----------|
| Applications List and Specialist Lists | 8,496 | 10,747 | 26.4% |
| Special fixtures | 296 | 222 | -25.0% |

Judgments and rulings

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|-----------|---------|---------|----------|
| Judgments | 108 | 98 | -9.2% |
| Rulings | 137 | 161 | 17.5% |

Commercial Court

These figures include cases referred by the Commercial Court Trial Division and matters within the associate judges' original jurisdiction. Original jurisdiction initiations increased by 12.8%. Despite the marked increase in matters, actual hearings decreased. This is attributable to the success of case management and pre-trial mediations.

Commercial Court

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Hearings listed | 317 | 402 | 26.8% |
| Special fixtures | 80 | 53 | -33.7% |

Corporations List

There was a 22% increase in Corporations List initiations within the associate judges' and judicial registrars' original jurisdiction. More complex matters continue to present before the Court, requiring longer and more frequent hearings. Despite the increase in initiations, improved case management practices and compliance with Commercial Court practice notes mean matters require fewer hearings.

Corporations List

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Hearings listed | 3,822 | 3,613 | -5.4% |
| Special fixtures | 36 | 30 | -16.6% |

Common Law

There was a marked increase in hearings across the Associate Judges' Chambers Common Law lists, primarily due to judicial registrars of the Common Law Division joining the Associate Judges' Chambers in 2024-25. Previously, this work was captured only within the Common Law Trial Division reporting.

Common Law Division

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Hearings listed | 3,117 | 5,930 | 90.2% |
| Special fixtures | 180 | 130 | -27.7% |

Associate judges – workload

More matters are being referred to mediation for resolution, and associate judges are hearing more of these referred matters without requiring an appearance by parties. This contributes to cost savings for litigants and reduces delay.

Number of hearings by type

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Within lists | 1,030 | 1,088 | 5.6% |
| Special fixtures | 201 | 153 | -23.8% |
| On the papers | 511 | 607 | 18.7% |
| Mediations | 133 | 144 | 8.2% |

Percentage of all applications heard, by division⁴¹

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance ⁴² |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Common Law (excl. Property List) | 28.7% | 26.7% | -6.9% |
| Commercial Court | 15.7% | 14.3% | -8.9% |
| Property List | 59.3% | 56.6% | -4.5% |

Finalisations

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|---------|---------|----------|
| Cases finalised with at least one hearing before an associate judge ⁴³ | 92.3% | 91.5% | -0.8% |
| Commercial Court: average finalisation time (months) ⁴⁴ | 2.3 | 2.3 | 0.0% |
| Common Law: average finalisation time (months) | 5.1 | 6 | 17.6% |

Judicial registrars – workload

This comparative analysis for 2023-24 and 2024-25 includes past workload by the Common Law judicial registrars prior to their integration into the Associate Judges' Chambers.⁴⁵

Number of hearings by type

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Within lists | 4,028 | 5,512 | 36.8% |
| Special fixtures | 16 | 14 | -12.5% |
| On the papers | 2,492 | 2,942 | 18.1% |
| Mediations | 231 | 212 | -8.2% |

Percentage of all applications heard, by division⁴⁶

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|---------|---------|----------|
| Common Law | 49.3% | 53.5% | 8.5% |
| Commercial Court (excluding Winding Up List) | 23.1% | 29.7% | 39.4% |
| Winding Up List | 97.1% | 98.3% | 4.3% |

⁴¹ By an associate judge in part or wholly.

⁴² The number of applications have increased overall, including the number of applications heard by associate judges.

⁴³ Percentage of matters finalised in the Civil Division, excluding Court of Appeal.

⁴⁴ From commencement.

⁴⁵ For more about the Common Law Division, see p. 29.

⁴⁶ By a judicial registrar in part or wholly.

Judicial Mediation

About Judicial Mediation

Judicial mediations are conducted by associate judges and judicial registrars. Court-annexed mediations are also conducted by the Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) registrar, and other deputy prothonotaries.

Overview

Cases are referred to mediation from the Commercial Court, Common Law Division and Court of Appeal. Cases can be referred to mediation at any stage of the litigation, including at, or just before, the beginning of trial.

In addition to the Court's mediation program, many cases are mediated by a private mediator agreed on by the parties. These mediators are often barristers or solicitors who practise in the area of alternative dispute resolution.

The ADR Centre team continued to manage the Court's mediation program under the guidance of Judicial Registrar Caporale and ADR Registrar Day.

Their work and the Court's mediation program were overseen by the ADR Committee, chaired by Justice Matthews.

Although facilities at the SCV Mediation Centre can also accommodate a hybrid of online and in-person mediations, most mediations were conducted in person following its opening in May 2023.

A total of 601 cases were referred to judicial or court annexed mediation and 369 were completed. Of these, 63.1% were resolved or part resolved on the day of the mediation, with a 81% resolution rate for Testator Family Maintenance matters, 51% for shareholder oppression matters and 67% for personal injury/abuse matters.

Settling matters at mediation saved an estimated 1,484 trial days and millions of dollars in legal costs for litigants. Costs Court mediations saved a further estimated 381 hearing days.

Mediation activity

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|---------|---------|----------|
| Cases referred for mediation | 539 | 601 | 11.5% |
| Mediations completed | 352 | 369 | 4.1% |
| Cases resolved on day of mediation | 217 | 227 | 4.6% |
| Cases part resolved on day of mediation | 3 | 6 | 100% |
| Percentage of cases resolved or part resolved on day of mediation | 63% | 63.1% | 0.2% |
| Hearing days saved by cases being resolved at mediation | 1,081 | 1,484 | 37.3% |

Associate Judges

Associate Justice Hetyey
Associate Justice Irving
Associate Justice Steffensen
Associate Justice Barrett
Associate Justice Gobbo

Reserve Associate Judges

Associate Justice Efthim
Associate Justice Wood

Judicial Registrars

Judicial Registrar Englefield
Judicial Registrar Baker
Judicial Registrar Woronczak
Judicial Registrar Caporale
Judicial Registrar Conidi
Judicial Registrar McCann
Judicial Registrar Gitsham
Judicial Registrar Burgess
Judicial Registrar Lorenz
Judicial Registrar Tueno

ADR Registrar

ADR Registrar Day

Deputy Prothonotaries

Benjamin Calvitto
Kate Price

Costs Court

About the Costs Court

The Costs Court determines costs disputes between litigants arising from court proceedings in all jurisdictions in Victoria (party/party disputes) and disputes between legal practitioners and their clients – usually over the solicitor’s bill – under the legal profession legislation (solicitor/client disputes). The Costs Court continues to improve processes to achieve greater efficiency of court resources and significant costs savings for litigants.

Key points

1

Of the 293 summonses initiated, 209 were party/party summonses, primarily from matters litigated in the Supreme Court, and 84 were solicitor/client summonses.

2

308 matters were finalised, with a clearance rate of 105%, leading to a decrease in the number of pending cases. The median average time to finalise party/party proceedings is 2.3 months, and for solicitor/client proceedings is 6.2 months.

3

Costs registrars and registry staff provided training to members of the Law Institute of Victoria on the practices and procedures in the Costs Court.

Changes to scale of costs

On 1 January 2025, major changes were introduced to the *Supreme Court (General Civil Procedure) Rules 2015* and scale of costs. These changes related to the recovery of party/party costs. They follow the recommendations of the Supreme Court and County Court Review of Litigious Costs.⁴⁷

The adoption of time costing aims to reduce the gap between the costs payable by a litigant to their solicitor, and what they recover from the other side. The new scale provides flexibility to accommodate the various forms of charging practices adopted by legal practitioners as well as the rapid changes in technology and its use in modern law practices. It provides a simplified, cost-effective, fair and transparent scheme for the recovery of party/party costs in Victoria.

Key features include:

- a 3-tiered time-based scale of costs ('reasonable hourly rates') based on post admission experience of legal practitioners
- provisions for recovery of party/party costs where the party entitled to costs is charged on a basis other than time by their own solicitor
- detailed criteria to determine 'reasonableness'
- recognition of professionals (accountants, financial advisors, information data/forensic analysts) employed by law practices to complement or support the delivery of legal services
- a change to the rules that allows the Costs Court, in the absence of an order by the Court to the contrary, either on application of a party or on the Costs Court's own motion, to make an order for gross-sum costs instead of taxed costs.

To assist the profession with the transition to the new regime, the Court published a comprehensive Notice to the Profession (September 2024) and a Practice Note (operative from 1 January 2025) and Judicial Registrar Conidi also delivered educational seminars to numerous practitioner groups.

⁴⁷ The Hon. Justice Jack Forrest and Judge Kathryn Kings, Supreme Court of Victoria and County Court of Victoria, 'Report on Litigious Costs' (3 May 2022). See also 'Review of Litigious Costs. Stage 1 Implementation' (Consultation Paper, 14 December 2022).

Resolution of costs disputes

The Costs Court uses various procedures to resolve party/party costs disputes:

- a. Mediations provide the most efficient, effective and flexible means of resolving costs disputes, particularly for complex matters with large costs claims. Examples include a solicitor/client matter mediated by a Costs judge where legal fees amounted to over \$5,200,000. The resolution of the matter saved 25 hearing days. Further, Judicial Registrar Conidi successfully mediated seven related party/party summonses with a total claim of approximately \$1,950,000, saving 13 hearing days. In total 116 mediations were completed this year with a resolution rate of approximately 72%. The overall saving of approximately 381 sittings days equates to at least a \$2.4 million saving in appearance fees alone.
- b. The alternative assessment procedure⁴⁸ remains an integral part of the Costs Court efficiency measures. Assessments in chambers are done on all claims under \$100,000 and on all matters that fail to resolve at mediation, irrespective of the amount of the claim. Of the 138 notices of estimate sent to litigants this year, 115 were accepted (83%). In most cases assessments are cost neutral, providing a significant cost benefit to litigants.
- c. Taxations constituted 5.2% of the Costs Court's work, with 16 matters from a total of 308 finalised matters being taxed. The transition from taxations to more innovative and cost-effective means of resolving costs disputes continues to be a significant achievement for the Costs Court.

The more efficient use of Court resources has enabled Judicial Registrar Conidi to conduct regular mediations in all areas of the Court's jurisdiction. Since January 2025, he has been sitting in Funds in Court one day a week.

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Conidi

Costs Registrars

Costs Registrar Roger Walton

Costs Registrar Penny Van den Berg



⁴⁸ Pursuant to Part 8 of Order 63 of the Rules.

Registry and Court Operations

About the Registry and Court Operations

Registry provides frontline services to Court users and specialist legal, case management, policy and administrative support to the judiciary. Court Operations include the work of the Digital Litigation and Business Intelligence teams.

Key points

1

A new registry model to support the divisions of the Court and create a single point of entry for court users was introduced. The restructured Supreme Court Registry, led by the Executive Director Supreme Court Operations & Prothonotary⁴⁹, includes a Civil arm, supporting the Common Law Division, Commercial Court, Costs Court and miscellaneous functions of the Prothonotary. It also includes an Appeals & Crime arm, supporting the Criminal Division and Court of Appeal.

2

Digital Litigation continued to provide vital support for digital elements of hearings. The team provided on-site and remote support for trials including video links to allow certain witnesses to give evidence remotely and family members and the media to observe proceedings from overflow facilities or other locations.

3

Registry personnel developed the new RedCrest-Search website that launched on 30 June 2025, making it easier for court users to submit litigation and file search requests.

Registry

Appeals & Crime

As part of the restructure of Registry Services, the registries supporting the Court of Appeal and Criminal (Trial) Division were merged to form an arm of the Registry called Appeals & Crime.

The new structure led to adjustments to the administrative and legal support provided to chambers. Registry lawyers continued to actively case manage matters and provide high-quality legal support to judges across both divisions to prioritise the hearing and determination of cases. The team also managed hearing rosters, courtroom allocations, facilitating prisoner movements with Corrections Victoria and video links, as well as facilitating local student engagement with judges during Court of Appeal hearings in Bendigo and Geelong.

The Appeals & Crime team coordinated improved access to proceedings through livestream technology, allowing practitioners and the public to remotely view most hearings (in the Court of Appeal), including those held in regional locations.

For further information about the Court of Appeal, see p. 17.

For further information about the Criminal Division, see p. 20.

Civil

The Civil arm of Registry, formed by the merger of the Principal Registry with the Commercial Court Registry and Common Law Team, brought together expertise in managing Common Law Division, Commercial Court and Costs Court proceedings to streamline and develop more consistent processes for court users and the judiciary. In 2024-25, this team:

- developed automated processes for settlements in group proceedings, enabling group members to easily object to settlements and reducing Registry workload
- supported the implementation of changes to the case management processes for personal injury lists, including processing the Court's own-motion first directions timetabling orders
- supported automation projects to streamline Court file inspections, litigation searches and the processing of orders.

For further information about the Common Law Division, refer to p. 29.

For further information about the Commercial Court, refer to p. 24.

For further information about the Costs Court, refer to p. 40.

⁴⁹ The Prothonotary is an officer of the Court under the *Supreme Court Act 1986* (Vic) and is vested with a range of powers.

The Prothonotary

Under the Supreme Court Rules, the Prothonotary has a range of powers that includes managing file transfers between jurisdictions, coordinating service of proceedings outside Australia and administering bails. The Prothonotary also engages in the following responsibilities, supported by deputy prothonotaries and other Registry staff.

Default judgments and warrants

Parties apply to the Prothonotary for default judgments where a claim is undefended. Parties also seek warrants from the Prothonotary to take possession or seize property as the means of enforcing a judgment. In both cases the Prothonotary must be satisfied that requirements of the *Supreme Court (General Civil Procedure) Rules 2015* were met.

Fees and fee waivers

Fees are payable to the Court in accordance with the *Supreme Court (Fees) Regulations 2018 (Vic)*. Fees may be waived in instances of financial hardship or when certain automatic fee waiver criteria are met. The Prothonotary collects the appropriate fee and determines if a party is eligible for a fee waiver.

During the year, 318 financial hardship waiver applications were granted, representing a waiver of fees totalling \$308,818.40. While there was a slight decrease in the number of waivers overall, the value of fees waived increased by 40.65% (up from \$219,558.70 in 2023–24).

File searches and subpoena coordination

The Prothonotary oversees requests by non-parties, including media organisations, to inspect court files. They also manage subpoenas requiring the production of documents and other materials in preparation for Court proceedings.

In 2024–25, there were 4,293 appointments to inspect subpoenaed documents (up 32.25% from 2023–24). This reflects the continuing rise in personal injury initiations in which subpoenas for production are a common investigative tool used by practitioners.

Admissions as an Australian lawyer

In conjunction with the Chief Justice's chambers, the Prothonotary supports the process for applicants being admitted as Australian lawyers and as officers of the Supreme Court of Victoria. The Prothonotary also maintains the roll of Australian lawyers on behalf of the Court. In 2024–25, 2,128 individuals were admitted, a 6.5% increase from 2023–24. (1,715 in person and 413 on the papers).

The Prothonotary issued 209 certificates of good standing (up from 136 in 2023–24) and 133 duplicate admission certificates, both predominantly supporting admitted Australian lawyers seeking to practise in foreign jurisdictions.

Additional Operations Support

Digital Litigation

The Court's digital practices and services continue to be an integral part of how the Court manages matters. All 13,264 matters heard or mediated this financial year received some level of support from Digital Litigation. This included the use of eCourt technology, Mediation Centre technology, livestreaming and remote or hybrid hearing arrangements.

In 2024–25, 4,477 proceedings were made accessible via 1,734 livestreams, whether by public link on the website or private link on request. Proceedings are livestreamed via individual links or a combined link relating to the division or judicial officer.

Livestreaming of court hearings continues to provide open access to hearings for the Victorian community. The Court continues to use technology to facilitate hearings for members of the community with specific requirements, for example mobility access requirements. In 2024–25, 807 participants viewed livestreams in regional Victoria, and 22,016 participants viewed livestreams from Melbourne.

The team also assisted with connecting Supreme Court hearings held in other courts, such as on circuit or in the County Court of Victoria, and those involving multiple co-accused and confidential remote witnesses, including overseas participants from Samoa, Vanuatu and China.

Business Intelligence

The Business Intelligence team is responsible for the ongoing data management, analysis and reporting elements of the Court's operations. The team supports the information requirements of the Court and external stakeholders.

In 2024–25, the team developed and deployed reporting and analysis tools for the Court. These included:

- ▶ interactive dashboards to assist divisions with analysing and reporting on their performance
- ▶ quarterly performance reports to inform judiciary and management
- ▶ the continued development and delivery of a data warehouse, which will improve the Court's ability to meet future demand for data.



Probate Office

About the Probate Office

Probate is the process by which the Court finds that a will is valid and can be acted upon by the executor/s. The Court has exclusive authority to make orders about the validity of wills, appointment of administrators of deceased estates where there is no valid will and administration of deceased estates.

The Probate Office manages all applications for grants of probate and administration. It maintains a register of all grants issued by the Court and wills deposited with the Court for safekeeping.

Key points

1

A major system upgrade streamlined the application process by enabling applicants to publish a notice of intention to apply within RedCrest-Probate, eliminating the need to use two separate platforms.

2

The Supreme Court of Victoria completed the first ever transfer of electronic court files to the Public Record Office of Victoria, marking a significant milestone and paving the way for future transfers of Probate Office records.

3

The average value of Victorian assets disclosed in applications exceeded \$1.1 million, with the median over \$640,000. Grants issued by the Probate Office facilitated these assets to be sold or distributed according to either the will or the laws of intestacy.⁵⁰

Overview

Informed by feedback received through a user survey conducted in June 2024, the Probate Systems Upgrade Project (PSUP) implemented 112 enhancements to RedCrest-Probate during the reporting period. The PSUP reflects the Court's commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

Key improvements included integration of the advertising process, enhanced search functionality for Probate Office records, and replacement of the payment gateway system.

Previously, applicants had to enter identical information into both the Probate Online Advertising System and RedCrest-Probate. Integrating advertising with RedCrest-Probate removed duplication and streamlined the overall user experience for legal practitioners and self-represented applicants.

Other features included the addition of free-text entry for occupations and predictive address fields.

The 'Wills and Estates' section of the Supreme Court of Victoria website was also updated to improve navigation and ensure the provision of clear, accessible information. A new 'Help with Probate Office processes' hub was launched. This features two interactive questionnaires to assist users with identifying the correct application type to make, and determining advertisement requirements.

On 18 November 2024, the *Supreme Court (Fees) Amendment Regulations 2024* came into effect. Changes introduced by the government included new estate-value brackets and fees, adjustments to advertising and small estate fees, and new fees for re-advertising and filing amended originating motions. These changes prompted a surge in applications in the week prior to commencement, with 1,358 applications filed, compared with 569 during the same period in 2023. This influx resulted in an increase in processing times, with an average of 16.9 days from filing to finalisation, and a median of 14 days.

Looking ahead, the Probate Office will continue work on transferring historical wills made by soldiers during World War I and II to the Public Record Office Victoria. These records hold significant historical value and will support family history research and academic investigation.

⁵⁰ The laws relating to how an estate is distributed in the absence of a will.

Total applications filed

 **26,638**

▲ 1.4% FROM 2023-24

Non-contested applications made w/o legal representation

 **2,533**

9.5% OF TOTAL APPLICATIONS

Searches of Probate Office files

 **2,335**

▲ 26.8% FROM 2023-24

Applications filed

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Probate | 22,264 (84.8%) | 22,535 (84.6%) | 271 (1.2%) |
| Administration upon intestacy | 3,047 (11.6%) | 3,136 (11.8%) | 89 (2.9%) |
| Administration with the will annexed (attached) | 608 (2.3%) | 620 (2.3%) | 12 (2%) |
| Reseals of foreign grants | 293 (1.1%) | 302 (1.1%) | 9 (3.1%) |
| Other applications, including for limited grants | 47 (0.2%) | 45 (0.2%) | -2 (-4.3%) |
| Total applications filed | 26,259⁵¹ | 26,638 | 379 (1.4%) |

Probate Office activities

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Applications made by people without legal representation | 2,256 (8.6%) ⁵² | 2,533 (9.5%) | 277 (12.3%) |
| Applications concerning informal wills or documents (s. 9 <i>Wills Act 1997</i>) | 181 (0.7%) | 170 (0.6%) | -11 (-6.1%) |
| Applications made through the small estates service | 148 (0.6%) | 92 (0.3%) | -56 (-37.8%) |
| Advertisements published | 31,201 | 31,791 | 590 (1.9%) |
| Caveats filed | 337 | 355 | 18 (5.3%) |
| Probate Office files pending in the Trusts, Equity and Probate List | 147 | 147 | 0 |
| Emails responded to by the Probate Office | 9,226 | 9,262 | 36 (0.4%) |
| Phone calls received by the Probate Office | 23,142 | 24,290 | 1,148 (5%) |
| Wills deposited with the Probate Office for safekeeping | 417 | 604 | 187 (44.8%) |
| Searches of Probate Office files | 1,842 | 2,335 | 493 (26.8%) |

⁵¹ This figure differs from the published 2023-24 figure due to a correction made to the data after publication.

⁵² This number has been adjusted from the number reported in the 2023-24 annual report to exclude contested applications where another party was self-represented.

Additional Court services



Court support services

The Supreme Court is supported in its delivery of justice by several teams and areas within the Court, and Court Services Victoria (CSV), that provide a range of mostly corporate functions.

The Supreme Court spans multiple locations, including three heritage-listed sites, all of which are maintained and repaired under the Court's facilities function. The large and ageing infrastructural footprint presents unique challenges to ensure ongoing safety and security for all judicial officers, staff and court users. Facilities was also involved in the design of the replacement of the main electrical distribution boards, and the installation of a backup power generator for the Trial Division, Court of Appeal and Old High Court buildings, which will be delivered in 2025-26. This project will ensure critical IT, eCourt and security infrastructure have a reliable supply of electricity and backup source.

There is a continued focus on judicial officer and staff workplace safety to address an increase in threatening and disruptive behaviour. The Court's **Security** is addressing these issues through safety initiatives that make the workplace safe for judicial officers and staff, and create a safer environment for court users.

The Court's archivists transferred records from the 20th and early 21st centuries to the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), which included Orders to review, Council of Judges papers and minute books, commercial and civil law case files, Full Court minute books, Wards of Court registers and indices, and a roll of Magistrates dating from 1841. The Court also transferred many probate records, indices and registers from the 19th and 20th centuries to PROV. Additionally, more than 10,000 digital probate records from 2020 were transferred to PROV.

The Court made significant strides in strengthening its digital infrastructure, enhancing cyber resilience, and improving risk management practices. Under **Operations Support and Project Delivery**, key initiatives to modernise systems and streamline processes were delivered. These efforts reflect the Court's ongoing commitment to delivering secure, efficient, and accessible services to the community.

The Court's **online opt-out system** enhances accessibility and convenience for community members involved in group proceedings. The system streamlines

the opt-out process, providing faster response times through automated email confirmations and significantly reducing manual data entry for staff by automating key workflows. Further enhancements were made to the system in December to allow group members to lodge objections during settlement approval processes.

Following a significant network outage, the Court invested in **upgrading the eCourts network**, with the aim of restoring full operational capacity and enhancing long-term system stability. The upgrade modernised the eCourts infrastructure, enabling for the first time simultaneous digital functionality across all 32 courtrooms, a major milestone in the Court's digital litigation capabilities. **Digital Litigation**, in collaboration with CSV technical teams, successfully maintained continuity of Court operations.

In response to the increasing complexity and frequency of cyber threats and following the Court's transition to a centralised CSV-supported IT service in 2024, CSV commissioned an independent internal audit of the **Court's cybersecurity** processes and controls. The audit identified opportunities for improvement and provided valuable recommendations to inform CSV's Cybersecurity Roadmap. This work is a key step in strengthening the Court's cyber resilience and enhancing its ability to manage digital risk.

In line with the centralisation of corporate services to CSV, the Court undertook a review and update of its **risk management** processes. As part of this enhancement, standardised risk profiles and dashboards were introduced to support active risk monitoring and improve reporting. This shift promotes a more compliant and responsive risk culture across the organisation.

The systems and infrastructure supporting the Probate Office - and the Court more broadly - underwent a transformative uplift through the **Probate Systems Upgrade Project (PSUP)**. PSUP resulted in measurable improvements in system stability and cost efficiency. Some key achievements to support the Court included:

- ▶ integration of advertising functionality into RedCrest-Probate, eliminating the need for the Court to provide procedural and technical support for two separate systems
- ▶ developing a mechanism for transferring digital court records to PROV. The ability to transfer digital records to PROV will reduce digital storage costs for the Court
- ▶ the delivery of enhancements to RedCrest-Probate that have created workflow efficiencies for the Probate Office and improving technical support
- ▶ significant improvements made to the Court's technological environment have reduced annual costs by over \$300,000.

Other benefits delivered by PSUP are further outlined in the 'A Court for the Community' section, p. 12.

These systems and infrastructure improvements that support increased efficiency, along with future automation projects, will continue to support the Supreme Court Registry's workload management to delivery timely service when processing court documents.

The Supreme Court's communications function transitioned to a new centralised model on 9 December 2024, where the Court's communications needs continued to be supported by Court Services Victoria. **Communications** manage a refreshed Courts Education Program, which welcomed VCE Legal Studies classes from schools across the state to observe cases and meet with judicial officers, supported the delivery of ceremonial functions and events at the Court, and managed public information published on the Court's website and social media platforms for Court users and the community. The team also managed media interest in the Court's proceedings, the suppression order database and court reporting. Read more about how the Court continued to deliver and improve the community's access to the work of the Supreme Court on p. 12.

Funds in Court

About Funds in Court

Funds in Court (FIC) supports the function of the Senior Master, an associate judge, who holds, invests and manages funds paid into Court for the benefit of persons under a legal disability.

FIC works to enhance the lives of clients, ensuring the safe and effective investment of their funds at low cost, and use of their funds in a manner that responds to their diverse needs and aspirations.

FIC is a self-funded, not-for-profit division of the Court. FIC does not charge direct fees for the services provided. Investment returns, less FIC's operating expenses, are credited to client accounts via interest rates that are declared annually.

The Senior Master also manages funds paid into Court pending the outcome of a proceeding, as security for costs, and pursuant to the *Trustee Act 1958 (Vic)*.⁵³

Key points

1

Managed funds and assets valued at \$2.42 billion⁵⁴ in 2024-25 on behalf of 7,170 clients. Cash and fixed interest fund returns exceeded benchmarks.

2

FIC hosted the Embrace event attended by nearly 250 guests. Embrace celebrates clients' creative achievements, providing them with a forum to share their visual art and performance skills every two years.

3

A refreshed, contemporary website design was launched to be more accessible for clients.

4

Upon review of its governance structure, a Service Advisory Committee of disability sector experts was implemented to provide advice and recommendations to the Senior Master, ensuring FIC respects clients' inherent dignity, diversity and human rights, and meets and exceeds contemporary service expectations.



⁵³ Such funds are referred to as 'non-award funds' and are held in Common Fund No. 1. Refer to the **Funds in Court website** (<https://www.fundsincourt.vic.gov.au>) for more information.

⁵⁴ Data within this section is reported to two decimal points. This is to preserve accuracy of the volume of funds being managed, costs incurred by clients and investment returns.

Judicial officers who served in Funds in Court

Senior Master

Associate Justice Steffensen
Associate Justice Goulden
(acting)

Judicial Registrar

Judicial Registrar Woronczak
Judicial Registrar Conidi (acting)

Client services

FIC provides a range of services relating to the administration of client funds.

Clients request to use their funds by talking to their dedicated **Client Services Officer** and providing supporting documents.

A Client Liaison Officer can visit clients and their caregivers (in person or online) to better understand a client's will and preferences and needs. There were 548 meetings in 2024-25, up from 533 in 2023-24.

Where necessary, client requests are reviewed by FIC's **Legal Officers** who provide legal advice relevant to the use of client funds. Legal Officers also assist clients in dealing with the National Disability Insurance Agency, the Transport Accident Commission and other statutory bodies.

Requests for funds are submitted to the judicial officers. Payments are made pursuant to court orders made by the Senior Master or judicial registrar.

Number of documents received, orders and payments made

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|-----------------------|---------|----------|
| Documents received in relation to client requests | 110,621 | 121,615 | 9.94% |
| Orders | 5,727 | 5,834 | 1.87% |
| Payments made on behalf of clients | 124,091 ⁵⁵ | 125,143 | 0.85% |

Client service delivery

FIC exceeded the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

- 94.43% of clients' invoices were approved and ready for payment within five working days of being received (KPI 90%)
- 95.79% of the 41,426 telephone calls were answered within 60 seconds (KPI 90%)
- 85.25% of client requests were responded to within five working days of being received (KPI 80%).

FIC welcomes feedback and treats complaints seriously. During 2024-25, 66 complaints were recorded, down from 79 in 2023-24.

Funds held

The total value of funds under administration, including direct investment in real estate and other assets, was \$2.42 billion on 30 June 2025 (\$2.26 billion on 30 June 2024).

Funds paid into Court are held in Common Fund No. 1 (non-award funds),⁵⁶ Common Funds No. 2 and No. 3 (client funds), the Guarantee and Reserve Account (operational funds) and real estate.⁵⁷

The Victorian Auditor-General has concluded that FIC's 2024-25 financial report is presented fairly and has issued an unmodified audit opinion.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ This figure has been updated since the publication of the 2023-24 Supreme Court Annual Report.

⁵⁶ 'Non-award' funds are funds that are not held for a particular person who, but for disability, is presently entitled to them. Non-award funds include dispute funds and funds held as security for costs.

⁵⁷ The real estate held on trust mostly comprises residential properties in which clients live.

⁵⁸ Financial reports are available on the '**Reports**' page of the **Funds in Court website** (<https://www.fundsincourt.vic.gov.au/publications/reports/>).

Common Funds and property (\$'000s)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| Common Fund No. 1 | \$49,541 | \$53,193 | 7.37% |
| Common Fund No. 2 | \$964,117 | \$1,049,366 | 8.84% |
| Common Fund No. 3 | \$787,514 | \$827,910 | 5.13% |
| Guarantee and Reserve Account | \$66,819 | \$67,795 | 1.46% |
| Real estate | \$440,114 | \$431,818 | -1.88% |
| Number of properties | 515 | 511 | -0.78% |

Money paid into/out of Court (\$'000s)

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Paid into Court | | | |
| Common Fund No. 1 | \$23,920 | \$23,223 | -2.91% |
| Common Fund No. 2 | \$124,333 | \$197,020 | 58.46% |
| Paid out of Court | | | |
| Common Fund No. 1 | \$27,853 | \$22,526 | -19.13% |
| Common Fund No. 2 | \$83,035 | \$54,084 | -34.87% |

New accounts opened by authorisation for payment in⁵⁹

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|---|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Award accounts | | | |
| Supreme Court order | 112 | 145 | 29.46% |
| County Court order | 79 | 119 | 50.63% |
| Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme / Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal award | 635 | 671 | 5.67% |
| <i>Trustee Act 1958 (Vic)</i> ⁶⁰ | 60 | 93 | 55.00% |
| Non-award accounts | | | |
| Dispute money (Supreme Court order) | 17 | 27 | 58.82% |
| Security for costs (Supreme Court order) | 28 | 34 | 21.43% |
| <i>Trustee Act 1958 (Vic)</i> ⁶¹ | 21 | 23 | 9.52% |
| Other | - | 1 | - |
| Total | 952 | 1,113 | 16.91% |

59 In 2024-25 Funds in Court is reporting on the number of new accounts opened in more detail. The total figures remain the same as reported in 2023-24.

60 Where a client is presently entitled to receive funds paid into Court under the *Trustee Act 1958 (Vic)*, the funds are held in Common Fund No. 2 (see the Investments section for more information about Common Fund No. 2). FIC holds these funds if the person is under a legal disability, cannot be found or is refusing to accept the transfer of the funds.

61 Where no person is presently entitled to funds paid into Court under the *Trustee Act 1958 (Vic)*, they are held in Common Fund No. 1 (see the Investments section for more information about Common Fund No. 1).

Investments⁶²

Investment Services considers and implements investment advice provided by consultants engaged by the Senior Master. The performance of the Common Funds continues to be in line with or exceed relevant benchmarks over the longer term.

To assist FIC to meet its investment objectives, the Senior Master is supported by an Investment Review Panel comprising industry experts who advise on investment decisions and investment-related issues.

The Investment Compliance Committee monitors compliance with FIC's Asset Management Policy and the *Supreme Court Act 1986* (Vic). No breaches were reported in 2024-25.

Common Fund No. 1 aims to provide a secure return on liquid investments through cash and fixed interest investments.

Common Fund No. 2 aims to provide the maximum return from investments in cash and fixed interest securities. The aim of FIC's investment strategy is to maximise income while preserving capital and providing sufficient liquidity to enable payments to clients.

Common Fund No. 3 aims to provide clients with capital growth and dividend income over an investment timeframe of at least six years. It invests in Australian shares and cash.

The **Guarantee and Reserve Account** provides for FIC's administrative expenses and may also be used for smoothing of the annual interest rates paid to clients.⁶³ The fund is invested to provide a secure return on liquid investments. This account is also intended to serve as a prudential safeguard for the investments of the Common Funds.

To address tax payable on income earned on clients' funds in Court, a trust tax return is lodged for each client account with the Australian Taxation Office, with 8,083 lodged in 2024-25.

Operating expenses and investment returns to clients⁶⁴

FIC benchmarks its operating expenses via its administration expense ratio. This represents the total cost to clients of managing their funds.⁶⁵ It was 0.65% for 2024-25 (0.64% in 2023-24).

Declared interest rate

The Senior Master, with the approval of the Chief Justice, declared the following crediting rates for funds held in Court on 31 May.⁶⁶

Declared interest rate

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Common Fund No. 2 | 2.55% | 2.75% |
| Common Fund No. 2 and Common Fund No. 3 ⁶⁷ | 2.35% | 2.55% |

Common Fund No. 3 performance

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Common Fund No. 3 | 12.44% | 6.56% |

The performance of Common Fund No. 3 is cyclical and can be volatile year-to-year. Its performance should not be compared solely against the previous year because short-term performance can fluctuate and is not indicative of future performance. Since its inception on 1 July 2004, it has returned an average of 8.43% per annum.

Corporate governance

FIC's governance and assurance structure includes committees of independent industry experts addressing audit, risk, investment, information technology and client services.⁶⁸

62 For more details about FIC's investment management, including fact sheets about the performance of Common Funds No. 2 and No. 3, see the 'How funds are managed and invested' page on the Funds in Court website (<https://www.fundsincourt.vic.gov.au/about-us/how-funds-are-managed-and-invested/>)

63 *Supreme Court Act 1986*, ss. 113(20)-(21).

64 For more details about how FIC's interest rates are determined and FIC's operational costs, refer to **Funds in Court credit rates and operational costs 2024-25** (<https://fundsincourt.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024-2025-Crediting-Rates-and-Operational-Costs.pdf>).

65 The administration expense ratio is calculated by dividing the total operating expenditure for the financial year (excluding depreciation) by the total net assets at the end of the financial year (including property).

66 In addition, 0.05% interest was credited to non-award funds in Common Fund No. 1 (0.05% in 2023-24).

67 The rates credited where a client has funds in both Common Fund No. 2 and Common Fund No. 3.

68 For more information about corporate governance, refer to the 'Governance' page on the Funds in Court website (<https://www.fundsincourt.vic.gov.au/about-us/governance/>).

Juries Victoria

About Juries Victoria

Juries Victoria assesses the eligibility of and summons citizens to serve as jurors on Supreme and County Court trials across the state. Juries Victoria strives to minimise the impact of jury service on summoned jurors while seamlessly meeting and exceeding the needs of the courts by delivering jury panels as required. Juries are central to Victoria's justice system – it is they who take on the weighty work of being the 'judges of the facts'.

Key points

1

More than 320,000 Victorians were randomly selected for jury service and almost 105,000 summonses were issued.

2

21,534 people attended court for jury service across the state, a slight increase despite a decrease in the overall juries empanelled. This year, there were 40 fewer juries empanelled in criminal trials and 10 more empanelled in civil trials.

3

3,440 jurors responded to a survey, with 79.2% describing their experience as positive and 98% indicating they were satisfied with the way they were treated by Juries Victoria and court staff.

Overview

Juries Victoria is committed to understanding and improving the juror experience. To that end, it offered every person who attended jury service in the 2024 legal year an opportunity to complete a survey, from which the *Juror satisfaction report* was published.⁶⁹

While jurors overwhelmingly reported a positive experience and satisfaction with their interactions with Juries Victoria and court staff, 5.7% reported a

negative experience. Feedback included being frustrated with the delays and uncertainty, feeling unprepared for the trial details, or unsupported with the processing of those details.

Overall, the feedback from jurors indicated that jury service fulfilled an educative purpose and provided a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, Victoria's system of trial by jury.



⁶⁹ For more information refer to the [Juror Satisfaction Report](https://files.juriesvictoria.vic.gov.au/2025-10/ReportJurorSatisfactionSurvey.pdf) (<https://files.juriesvictoria.vic.gov.au/2025-10/ReportJurorSatisfactionSurvey.pdf>)

Jury activity

Citizens randomly selected

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Melbourne | 78,925 | 78,908 | -0.02% |
| Regional Victoria | 265,235 | 245,608 | -7.4% |
| Total | 344,160 | 324,516 | -5.7% |

Summonses issued

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Melbourne | 37,441 | 35,467 | -5.3% |
| Regional Victoria | 69,989 | 69,488 | -0.7% |
| Total | 107,430 | 104,955 | -2.3% |

Citizens attended⁷⁰

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Melbourne | 13,047 | 14,778 | 13.3% |
| Regional Victoria | 7,692 | 6,746 | -12.3% |
| Total | 20,739 | 21,534 | 3.8% |

Juries empanelled⁷¹

Supreme Court

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Civil - Melbourne | 13 | 14 | 7.7% |
| Civil - regional Victoria | 4 | 6 | 50% |
| Criminal - Melbourne | 32 | 22 | -31.3% |
| Criminal - regional Victoria | 4 | 6 | 50% |
| Total | 53 | 48 | -9.4% |

County Court

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Variance |
|--|------------|------------|--------------|
| Civil - Melbourne | 45 | 52 | 15.6% |
| Civil - regional Victoria | 9 | 9 | 0% |
| Criminal - Melbourne | 303 | 296 | -2.3% |
| Criminal - regional Victoria | 121 | 96 | -20.7% |
| Total | 478 | 453 | -5.2% |
| Total across both jurisdictions | 531 | 501 | -5.6% |

⁷⁰ Not all individuals summoned are required to attend.

⁷¹ This is the number of juries empanelled, not the number of jury trials.

Law Library Victoria

About Law Library Victoria

Law Library Victoria advances justice through equitable access to trusted legal knowledge for judicial officers, the legal profession and the Victorian community.

The Supreme Court Library Committee, chaired by the Honourable Justice Greg Garde, manages the Law Library and oversees its strategic direction. The Committee includes six judicial officers and four nominees from the Victorian Bar and Law Institute of Victoria.

The Library's Director is Supreme Court Librarian Laurie Atkinson.

Key points

1

The Library website received a high volume of traffic, with an average of 28,330 visitors per month. Access to the library collection remained high, with resources accessed an average of 3,545 times per business day.

2

Engagement with the Library through events, training, and research support remained high, with over 5,850 in-person and online enquiries, and 17,031 visitors to the Library. More than 200 events were attended by more than 4,200 people from around Australia and overseas. The Library provided 42 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) for practitioners.

3

The Library advanced its digital and research resources by expanding e-book access, acquiring new AI technology and strengthening its partnership with the Victorian Bar through resource updates and ongoing research support.

Library snapshot

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--|---------|-----------------------|
| Queries, updates, tours, events and training attendees, <i>Library Bulletin</i> distribution | 126,711 | 130,899 |
| Website visits and database usage | 399,520 | 889,781 ⁷² |
| Judgments published on the Library website | 1,085 | 1,067 |

Strategic Planning and Policy

The *Supreme Court Library Rules 2024* ('Rules') effected significant changes to the Supreme Court Library Committee (the 'Committee'). The Rules provide for the County Court, Magistrates' Court and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to be represented on the Committee. The Supreme Court Library Fund Investment Committee was merged into the Committee and the *Supreme Court Library Fund Investment Rules 2021* were revoked. The Investment Fund and the Prize Fund⁷³ have been consolidated into the Library Fund under the management of the Committee.

The Library held a series of roundtable discussions with Victorian legal organisations, the library industry, publishing partners, and staff of Victorian courts and tribunals, shaping the strategic direction of the Library, and reinforcing its role as a vital resource within the legal community.

Additionally, the Library revised and updated its Service Policy to focus on staff and user wellbeing, respectful behaviour and the security of Library collections, buildings and facilities, as well as the overall continuous improvement to the Library's service.

Collections

The Committee revised the Collection Policy in March 2025 to state that collecting First Nations published legal information material is a priority for the Library. As a result, the Library is consulting widely to identify the potential for discovering, preserving and using public First Nations legal information.

The Library continues to collaborate with service providers to improve access to legal research technologies. Pilot testing initiatives have successfully led to the take-up of services, supported by communication and education campaigns. The Library's approach is informed by extensive consultation with the Courts Group and Victorian legal organisations.

⁷² As a result of changes to the way website visits are measured, 2024-25 figures reflect activities across all of the Library's digital platforms, providing a more holistic view of engagement levels.

⁷³ The Prize Fund was established by the Library Committee in 1891 to isolate a portion of the Library Fund for the awarding of prizes. In March 2025 the Library Committee resolved that the Library Fund would assume the responsibility to incur the cost of prizes and prize payments from 1 July 2024.

Working closely with the Victorian Bar Library Committee, the Library provides management of the Richard Griffith Library located in Owen Dixon Chambers East and in-house services for barristers. The service agreement was renewed for three years on 1 July 2024.

The Library Committee substantially updated and extended the digital and print textbook collection with input from specialist practice associations of the Victorian Bar, the Victorian Bar Library Committee and the Library.

Research support

On-site and digital research support is provided by the Law Library's expert librarians. The Library provides a dedicated librarian for each court, VCAT and the Victorian Bar, while legal practitioners are supported by the virtual and physical reference desk.

Research requests and general enquiries range from straightforward to complex. In 2024-25, the Library responded to 5,850 enquiries across all service points.

The Library Bulletin provides the legal community with timely updates on new judgments and legislative developments. The Bulletin is one of the most visited pages on the Library website, with 18,000 views in 2024-25. The Bulletin email is distributed fortnightly to more than 4,300 recipients.

Reference librarians continued to be physically present six hours a week in the Richard Griffith Library, providing legal research assistance and training. Additionally, barristers using the Richard Griffith Library computers have access to the full suite of online resources that are also available in the Supreme Court Library.

Digital library

The Library website is the central portal for library services and resources, hosting an average of 1,359 sessions each business day. During 2024-25, there were more than 339,961 visits to the website.

The digital library provides an authoritative and comprehensive collection, curated especially for the Victorian legal profession, regardless of their location. The collections utilise the combined knowledge of the Library's expert staff to provide a quick and easy avenue of research.

This year, the Library upgraded website searchability to improve resource access and discoverability, providing tailored results by user group, and integrating catalogue records with site content.

The Library provides a publishing service for the Supreme Court on behalf of the Council of Law Reporting in Victoria. Court judgments are processed and published to the Library catalogue and the Library Bulletin and sent to external publishers, with social media alerts providing timely updates for the profession. In 2024-25, the Library published 1,067 judgments.

Engagement

To increase the awareness and reach of services, the Library engages stakeholders via events, sponsorship, training, and communications.

In 2024-25, the Library presented and hosted more than 200 legal research training and cultural experiences, engaging more than 4,200 legal professionals, courts staff, tertiary students and members of the public, from Australia and beyond. Activities included 42 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) for Victorian lawyers.

Funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, the Law Library continued the Regional Roadshow in 2024-25, visiting lawyers in Shepparton, Warrnambool, Geelong, and Ballarat as part of its commitment to regional outreach and building awareness of the authoritative legal resources available.

Other key initiatives included events exploring artificial intelligence (AI) and the law, public legal education as part of Victorian Law Week and Lyrical Lunchtimes, a concert series held in the Supreme Court Library.

The Library continues to build connections with the legal profession online, sharing research tips and timely legal updates across its social media channels. In 2024-25, follower numbers rose across all platforms, with LinkedIn recording a 61% increase.

Regular email campaigns are sent to lawyers throughout the year, keeping practitioners informed about Library resources, services, CPD events, e-learning, and operational updates. Each campaign is sent to more than 22,000 Victorian practitioners.



Leadership and governance

About leadership and governance

The Supreme Court of Victoria was established in its present form under s. 75 of the *Constitution Act 1975 (Vic)*.

Overview

The Chief Justice, as the head of the Supreme Court, is responsible for the effective, orderly and efficient execution of the business of the Court. The chief executive officer (CEO) oversees administrative functions, including ensuring the judiciary are supported to do their work and that Court users have information and guidance on Court process.

Funds in Court is recognised as a support function of the Court and operates as a discrete division under the direction of the Senior Master.

Governance established by law

Council of Judges

The Council of Judges, established under the *Supreme Court Act 1986 (Vic)* and chaired by the Chief Justice, considers the operation of the Court in compliance with statutory requirements and makes Rules of the Court.

Court Services Victoria

The *Court Services Victoria Act 2014 (Vic)* established Court Services Victoria (CSV) as an independent statutory body corporate to provide services and facilities to Victoria's courts, Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Judicial College of Victoria and the Judicial Commission of Victoria. CSV was formed to strengthen the independence of Victoria's courts and tribunals, and to put court administration into the hands of an entity directed by the judiciary.

Internal governance

Judicial Leadership Group

A leadership Group provides strategic advice to the Chief Justice on the effective execution of the Court's business. Its members in the reporting period were:

Chief Justice

Chief Justice Ferguson
(until 2 February 2025)

Chief Justice Niall
(from 3 February 2025)

President of the Court of Appeal

Justice Emerton

Principal Judge of the Criminal Division

Justice Jane Dixon

Principal Judge of the Common Law Division

Justice Keogh

Principal Judge of the Commercial Court

Justice Delany

Principal Associate Judge

Associate Justice Ierodiaconou

Chief Executive Officer

Michael Carroll

Administrative Leadership Group

The Administrative Leadership Group, led by the CEO, supports the administrative functions of the Court, including operations and administration, security and assets, policy and planning, communications and IT, finance and people services, and judicial support and registry services.

Appendix



Financial information

The Supreme Court's financial accounts are published as part of the audited financial accounts of Court Services Victoria (CSV). This information is available in CSV's annual report, by visiting www.courts.vic.gov.au.

Comprehensive operating statement for the financial year ending 30 June 2025.

| | 2023-24 \$'000 | 2024-25 \$'000 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Income from transactions | | |
| Output appropriations | 51,358 | 50,228 |
| Special appropriations | 46,831 | 39,929 |
| Grants | - | - |
| Total income from transactions | 98,190 | 90,157 |
| Expenses from transactions | | |
| Employee expenses and judicial officer remuneration | 76,153 | 74,462 |
| Interest expense | 216 | 231 |
| Grants and other transfers | 555 | 540 |
| Supplies and services | 17,611 | 14,529 |
| Total expenses from transactions | 94,535 | 89,762 |
| Net result from transactions (net operating balance) | 3,655 | 395 |
| Other economic flows included in net result | | |
| Other gains/(losses) from other economic flows | 197 | 59 |
| Total other economic flows included in net result | 197 | 59 |
| Comprehensive result | 3,851 | 455 |



SUPREME COURT OF VICTORIA

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Melbourne VIC 3000

supremecourt.vic.gov.au